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ABSTRACT

This book maintains that much of what children and adolescents are taught in school is of limited use to them in succeeding in life. It notes that although most school curricula focus on factual knowledge and cultural enrichment, they fall short in providing students with an education that focuses on individual abilities and inclinations, financial self-sufficiency, moral development, and self-identity. The book advocates a teaching and learning philosophy that makes students largely responsible for their own education and development so that they can function as independent, self-sufficient adults in society. Its central premise is that students need to learn to think for themselves, develop a worthwhile concept of the meaning of life, and learn to maneuver well in their environment. (MDM)

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"an original theory of learning and teaching"

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EDUCATING THE ENTIRE PERSON

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NOTE

At various times throughout this book, when I need a pronoun to describe a typical person, child, youngster or student, I stick with the masculine version even though the feminine version would do just as well. In these instances, I would gladly substitute a word that applied to either sex, but there is none available in the English language. Furthermore, I have found that trying to incorporate both masculine and feminine genders into one's sentences *every time accuracy warrants it* is inconvenient, and often results in very clumsy prose. Please be assured that I have not favored the use of masculine pronouns out of prejudice of any kind, but stick with them strictly to give a feeling of consistency to my writing style, and for ease and convenience of expression.

—The Author

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INTRODUCTION

The human mind exhibits magnificent qualities and capabilities. If properly nurtured and developed, it will be a reliable helpmate throughout a person's lifetime, and a good guide through the difficult terrain of life. And when properly influenced by the various principles of morality throughout its developing years, it will be inspired to perform for the sake of what is wholesome, honorable, good and decent in life. But the human mind is also vulnerable and delicate. It is susceptible to many things, and can be harmed in many ways. Its development can be hindered, undermined and obstructed. Its growth into an instrument capable of efficient reasoning, wise decisions and sound judgment can be derailed.

The type of learning that a particular mind undergoes, and the type of teaching it is exposed to, are essential factors in determining if it will fulfill its potential, stagnate, or develop improperly. Those who naively believe that learning always occurs for the betterment of the student should be reminded that brainwashing and indoctrination are forms of learning. A mind that is brainwashed into thinking a certain way, or that is indoctrinated with certain points of view, is a fanatical and prejudiced mind. It has not used reasoning and logic to arrive at what it knows, and so it cannot be expected to use reasoning and logic in applying or implementing the information and knowledge that it has. Such a mind is dangerous. In like fashion, learning that occurs because it is expected of students, or because students feel pressured to learn, should not be expected to be suited to their learning needs. And methods of teaching that do not focus on the specific learning needs of students should not be expected to have a beneficial effect upon them. When learning occurs simply because it is required of a student or expected of him, much of what is learned is, at best, excess and cumbersome baggage in the student's life. But, more often, such learning is an assault upon his happiness, peace of mind, spontaneity and free spirit. More often, it violates his integrity, invades and undermines his identity and individuality. More often, it derails the delicate, natural process of the development of the self that is unique to each individual.

Unfortunately, the rights and needs of the student have been

poorly represented by most who have formulated educational theories and policies in the past; and their errors have been adopted by most teachers. The learning and teaching that are occurring in our schools in America today are often unhealthy and dangerous. The human mind was never meant to be a passive collector of facts and information, which have been arbitrarily collected and just as arbitrarily foisted upon it. Being subjected to a steady diet of focusing on subject matter at the request of others, and following learning procedures designed by others, is not appropriate to the delicate and intensely individualistic nature of the human mind. A far different approach to learning and teaching must be formulated, and then properly applied, if responsible teaching and effective learning are to take place. This book attempts to provide a philosophical foundation for productive learning and responsible teaching.

July 1, 1993

THERE ARE FIVE ULTIMATE OBJECTIVES WHEN EDUCATING OUR YOUNGSTERS

If a youngster's education is to be effective, and of enduring value, I believe that five ultimate objectives need to be accomplished. One of the five objectives is to make sure his education satisfies the requirement each individual has to evolve naturally, in accordance with his own abilities, inclinations, needs and growth patterns. Another of the objectives is that of equipping him with the skills to be self-sufficient financially and with the skills to be able to manage his own affairs by the time his circumstances determine, or his society mandates, that he must move out into the world as an autonomous being and begin fending for himself. A third objective is that of moral development. A fourth objective is that of assisting him in his efforts to develop a clear, precise and satisfactory identity of his own. And the fifth objective, which is the one that has long been favored in America, is that of enriching the student from a cultural standpoint and offering him a broad range of factual knowledge.

Of these five educational objectives, four are critical. The only one which can be left unaccomplished without serious detriment to a youngster is the one which has been favored by the American system of education: that of cultural enrichment and the acquiring of a broad range of factual knowledge. While cultural enrichment and the acquiring of a broad range of factual knowledge have definite value, they are not as important as the other four educational objectives.

If the American people are going to be healthy, happy and capable, our educational system from pre-school onward must fully address the problems of human development and the requirements of adulthood concurrent with attempting to transmit information and knowledge of various kinds. In our modern times, life is abrupt, and the safety and security of parental care does not last long after eighteen years of age; and our society, itself, has very little commitment to coddling us and protecting us after we have reached eighteen years of age. So our preparedness for life and

our sense of ourself must be given a superb foundation while we are still growing up if we are going to survive in this world, and be a fit match for its demands and challenges. And, for most youngsters, there are only two places in which these things can be accomplished: in the home and in school; but parents are not professional educators, and may not have the ability, the tools nor the time to influence the development of their children in all the ways that are needed. It is, therefore, a proper and befitting job of our teachers and schools to take on these challenges; and, in fact, it is essential that they do so if America is going to be a strong society, and one which works in harmony with the needs of its people.

No effort should be spared in insuring that our young people will be *fully equipped* for supporting themselves financially and managing their own affairs by the time they have reached eighteen years of age, or by the time they are expected to fend for themselves and make their own way in the world. And no effort should be spared in insuring that the quality of their morals is evolving nicely at the same time. And no effort should be spared in insuring that the whole of their education coincides with their own needs, inclinations and growth patterns. And no effort should be spared in helping each youngster move forward in a sensitive and complex search for himself. To do less is to do our young people a great disservice; and will, indeed, endanger both them and our society. Since public and private schools are often better equipped for these tasks than parents, and already occupy a large percentage of each youngster's time, it is important that they (the schools) commit themselves fully to the proper development of the youngsters they instruct, and that they do so in a comprehensive manner.

Educating our youngsters in a manner that is in compliance with all five previously mentioned educational objectives, and paying the closest attention to the four objectives that are the most critical, would be a comprehensive and effective approach to education. However, since our current system of educating our young people in America is so heavily weighted in favor of cultural enrichment and the acquiring of a broad range of factual knowledge, and seriously neglects the other four educational objectives; the cur-

riculum of the American system of educating our youngsters, and the teaching methods and teaching tools employed, must be critically examined; and, where necessary, reformed or replaced. This is easier said than done because the old ways of doing things and looking at them within the system of education that is predominant in America today are reinforced by years of tradition and habit.

Sometimes the only way of taking an honest look at something is by eliminating the customary way of perceiving it; and, sometimes, the only way of honestly evaluating a procedure or practice is by having no prejudice in its favor. I find this rule to be most beneficial in coming to terms with many things; and, I have found it essential in trying to penetrate into the heart of what formal education should, and can, do for our young people in America today. So that I can have an opportunity to elaborate effectively on my concept of the five educational objectives, I will ask you, the reader, to temporarily forget all you have been taught about the role of the teacher and the role of the student. And I would like you to temporarily forget all you have been taught about the role of our schools and the nature of the educational process that occurs within them. If you will first do that for me, I then would like you to join me on an adventure in which we will explore a different way of looking at the educational process, and a fresh approach to educating our youngsters...

Let us start anew with the very first young pupils in the very first school. There are now no existing references for educating our children or young people. You and I are asked to design and implement a system for educating a small group of youngsters in their own best interest. We want to prepare the students for what life will require of them as adults, and for what they will require of themselves. We want them to end up being adults who are self-sufficient, happy and capable, who have integrity and good character, and who will contribute to the well-being of society; or, at least, not detract from its well-being. Let us assume we are given the right to influence these youngsters, who are from five to eighteen years of age, six hours per day, five days per week; and let us assume that we are provided with salaries for ourselves, schoolgrounds, a schoolhouse, and money for teaching equipment,

books and other tools of the trade. And we are given full and complete responsibility for the education of these youngsters. How will we proceed, and what will our educational objectives be? Well, I'm not sure how you will proceed, and what your educational objectives will be; but I know how I will proceed, and what my educational objectives will be.

My educational objectives will be far easier to decide than my procedures for implementing those objectives because implementing them would depend upon the particular requirements of each student I am instructing, and upon his responses to the items, methods and tools of instruction I am using for that purpose. I recognize that the educational items, methods and tools I employ, regardless of their merit, are useless unless they can be adapted to the needs, inclinations and growth patterns of my students. Each young student is a human being who exists in a certain form. He has certain thoughts, emotions, needs; and certain capacities, abilities and inclinations. If I am to be successful in instructing, I must do so in a way that is suitable to each individual youngster; and the more successfully I can relate to each youngster's individual learning needs, the better educator I can be. I realize that I cannot hope to instruct any youngster effectively unless I become the servant of his most urgent and pressing educational needs. I realize that I will fail badly in teaching anything if I do not pay close attention to each youngster's individual learning needs and requirements, and work within that framework; regardless of how well equipped I am as a teacher, and regardless of how good my schoolgrounds, schoolhouse, teaching equipment and teaching tools are.

Now that I have established the framework in which I shall teach, I am ready to concern myself with the substance of *what* I shall teach the youngsters. Rather than begin with specifics, I wish to establish general educational objectives that I feel are most appropriate and beneficial for the youngsters; and, afterward, I will figure out the specific items of instruction, and the methods and tools I will employ to try to convey those to my young students.

As an instructor of the total person, I consider the society in which I live in order to determine what will be required of my young students upon completion of their studies because I want

to formulate their studying objectives with that in mind. I determine that the society in which the youngsters I am to instruct will be growing up demands that each youngster be fully capable of supporting himself financially and managing his own affairs by the time he reaches eighteen years of age; or by the time he has completed his formal schooling, whichever occurs first. This is a glaring fact, one I cannot ignore if I am to be a responsible caretaker of the overall development and educational needs of the youngsters I am to instruct. And so, one of the central objectives of my instruction will be to provide each student with strong money-making skills and a thorough preparation for managing his own affairs and fending for himself in all the ways that will be required of him once he has reached eighteen years of age, or is required to go out on his own in the world. I realize that if a major portion of the educational process from age five through age eighteen is devoted to this, each student will have learned a lot about getting along on his own in the world by the end of that time, and should also have acquired legitimate money-making skills; and, as a result, would be able to enter the world at age eighteen equipped and confident, instead of a mere burden to himself, his parents and society. Instead of feeling helpless and worthless, like many young adults do, he will have dignity and pride, and the foundation for making a good life for himself. He will be able to start life as a capable person, making a real direction for himself; instead of as an incompetent one, at the mercy of everyone and everything within his society.

As an instructor of the total person, I realize that it is essential for each of my students to develop a satisfactory and well-defined identity of his own. I also realize that a student may acquire a great deal of facts, information and skills; yet if he does not have a satisfactory and well-defined identity of his own, he will not be an effective person, or a happy one. I understand that developing a well-defined and satisfactory identity of one's own is a complicated, sensitive and personal process, but one in which a teacher who is knowledgeable about life may play a part. Consequently, I will make a special effort to contribute to this aspect of each of my student's education, and I will make sure that I am never responsible for distracting my students from accomplishing this

most important mission.

As an instructor of the total person, I delve into everything that I am, and have learned about life, to determine what great morals and values I must impart to my young students; and I decide that all of them can be summed up in one word: character. I realize that information, knowledge and skills serve no purpose if they are not embraced by someone whose character is strong and good. Consequently, the inculcation of good character must be an essential part of my teaching if it is ultimately going to go for a good purpose. From the very beginning, then, I will spare no effort in helping my young students grow into people who are strong, good, kind and wise. I will take special pains in pointing out to them that all knowledge is to be used for the ultimate purposes of: living a fulfilling and constructive life; being good to people and making their lives better; and advancing all the things that are honorable, good and beautiful in life.

Lastly, I will try to imbue my students with a broad range of factual knowledge and with the cultural refinements of life, so that they will have as much as possible to select from in fashioning their lives; and in living them in an enlightened, sensitive, thoughtful and artistic manner.

These, then, are the five teaching objectives I will assign myself as one of the very first teachers in the very first school; which, as you can see, are the original educational objectives I presented at the beginning of this essay. The rest of the details of instructing the youngsters I am to teach, as to methods and items of instruction, and the type of instructional tools and equipment to be used, are of less importance; and I can attend to them in good time.

We can now return from this foray into an imaginary setting, for I have made the points I intended. I wish to thank the reader's indulgence, and ask that we now move on to additional aspects of my theory of educating the entire person.

THE THREE PHASES OF GROWING UP

Just as we can more easily understand the workings of an automobile if we separate it into its major components, such as engine, transmission, electrical system, cooling system, and so forth; we can more easily understand the process of growing up if we separate it into its major components.

I view the process of growing up as occurring in three distinct phases. The first phase I call the *orientation* phase. This is the phase young children go through in which they react to things uninhibitedly, spontaneously and often clumsily. Their identity as individuals is very uncertain and poorly developed. They know little about who they are and about what they should be doing. They are unskilled in planning, thinking things through, and organizing their time. They depend upon others to provide them with the main part of their emotional and psychological support, and know little about fending for themselves or looking after their own needs. They are children in the truest and most complete sense of the term. In actuality, they are orienting themselves to the things to be found in their immediate environment, to the various things outside of their immediate environment that come to their attention; and even to their own needs, feelings, thoughts, inclinations, habits and response patterns.

I refer to the second phase of growing up as the *experience seeking* phase. This applies to the time in which youngsters are demonstrating an ability to think things through, and already have a strong sense of themselves as specific individuals with specific needs, interests, habits, feelings, inclinations and thoughts. They have outgrown the extremely vulnerable and confused phase of childhood, and are ready for hearty participation beyond the safe environment of the home. This is a time for seeking experiences of every kind which can facilitate the process of learning and understanding. The more worthwhile and wide-ranging the life experiences of a youngster are during this phase of growing up, and the better he can relate to them and benefit from them, the faster the youngster will grow up and mature. It is the quality of

a person's experiences, and the quality of his ability to relate to and benefit from those experiences, that determine if his youth is well spent or not.

The third phase of a youngster's path of growing up, I refer to as the *deciding* phase. This is usually the late teens, and beyond. It is a time in which a young person, making use of years of testing and trying different things, experiencing many different things, and being exposed to many different philosophies and points of view, begins to firmly decide who and what he really is, what he wants to do with his life, and what he wants to ultimately become: in terms of his professional life, personal characteristics and way of life. These ultimate objectives, of course, are not written in stone because they will most likely be altered or changed with the passage of time; but, they can nonetheless be formulated, and referred to as a direction-finding tool.

While these three phases of growing up are distinctive, they often overlap; and aspects of one phase may often be found occurring within one of the other phases. When this is the case, it can be said that a youngster is *predominantly* in phase one, two or three of growing up.

Having expressed these opening paragraphs to clarify my concept of the three phases of growing up, I would like now to share with the reader some further thoughts that have occurred to me on each of these three phases. I'd like to begin again with the first phase of growing up, which I have labelled the *orientation* phase, and then elaborate more fully on phases two and three of growing up, in that order.

It is naturally important that youngsters in the initial phase of growing up, which I have termed the *orientation* phase, be viewed by adults and others through the appropriate pair of glasses. For, how we perceive them will result in how we will relate to them; and, consequently, in the effect we shall have upon their lives. If we view children as unruly little beings who must be contained and controlled, we are not viewing them in a responsible manner. If we view children as little more than nuisances who must be provided for, we will be poor caretakers of their future; and we will be interfering with, and actually blocking, the magical and delicate process of their growing up and becoming people of true

merit and value.

It is incumbent upon all adults, and others, to treat children with respect; and to grant that childhood has a dignity of its own. Though children are unruly, may be often a nuisance or troublesome, and may often get into mischief and create endless little problems and difficulties for their caretakers and providers; it is important that they not be made to feel inferior, and are not persecuted, on this account. They cannot help being children any more than we can help being adults. Even though it is difficult, or impossible, for the adult mind to view the little acts of mischief of children, or their unruly or chaotic behavior, as being worthwhile; and even though it is difficult, or impossible, for the adult mind to find real substance or meaning in the often trivial activities, pursuits and preoccupations of children, we can lend a dignity to those activities, pursuits and preoccupations by understanding that the dynamics behind them are truly magical and important. And that is because those dynamics, and the activities they produce, are an essential part of the overall process of growing up and becoming a complete person.

Viewed as part of a dynamic process that can have a very poignant, beautiful and meaningful outcome, the activities of children, no matter how trivial, troublesome or nonsensical they may appear, become awe-inspiring and worthy of our most profound appreciation. We must respect childrens' natural tendencies and inclinations if, indeed, they are native to childhood; and, those of their actions and activities we do not understand, we must give the benefit of the doubt and allow to exist, unless those actions or activities endanger life and limb. We must never play God over the lives of children, or try to suppress the natural functions and processes that are fundamental parts of their childhood natures. To do so is to stifle and frustrate children when they most need our support and encouragement. We must plainly give children a vote of confidence based upon the things they are and do as children, not based upon what we think they should do, nor upon how adults are expected to behave. While we can encourage children to improve and grow up; we must love, cherish and respect them *as they are*, and not pressure them to grow up and mature before they are ready.

Because growing up is a difficult process for most of us; and because growing up is a fragile and delicate process, susceptible to obstacles and impediments of all kinds; it is important for children to be confident in their ability to grow up into competent and capable human beings. Therefore, they must believe that their childish natures, and their activities as children, have worth; and they must be allowed to pour themselves into their childish natures, and fully experience the uniqueness, power and intensity of them. Strong, assertive and energetic adults are the outgrowth of strong, assertive and energetic children. So, it seems that an important gauge of the success of a youngster's childhood years is the intensity and purpose with which they are lived; and this fact may be of greater importance to the child's well-being and future development than his accomplishments in performing tasks or demonstrating abilities which are adult in nature. Thus, a restless or rebellious child, or a child prone to ingenious shenanigans and acts of mischief, might be seen, by virtue of these characteristics, to be exhibiting wonderful potential for strength of identity and character. This is so because we are evaluating his actions according to the needs and capacities of children; and not according to the standards of excellence that are applied to the behavior of adults.

If it is true that an important gauge of the success of a youngster's childhood years is the intensity and purpose with which they are lived; and if it is true that strong, assertive and energetic adults are usually the outgrowth of strong, assertive and energetic children; a teacher's first responsibility to each child whose development and instruction he is responsible for, is to preserve and encourage the intensity, enthusiasm and individuality of the child's native instincts and inclinations, regardless of the form in which they appear. When they are seen as an integral part of childhood, wild behavior, disorderly behavior, untamed curiosity, rebellion, and odd or unusual behavior can be endorsed by the teacher who wishes the best for his young students. In conjunction with endorsing the instincts and inclinations native to childhood, the teacher can try his best to influence the child's native instincts and inclinations toward more sophisticated avenues of expression, such as toward skilled articulation of thoughts and feelings. The same

intensity of emotion that is expressed in a wild scream, for example, can be expressed in a well thought-out statement. To preserve the intensity and enthusiasm of a child's native instincts and inclinations, as opposed to threatening them, a teacher must first of all condone them. The child should not be made to feel ashamed of, nor should he be chastised for, intense or enthusiastic behavior of his own invention. For, it is not for us to place a value on the child's behavior; rather it is our responsibility to preserve and encourage the individuality, intensity and enthusiasm that is behind it. If we criticize or try to control the child's behavior, we are doing the same to the beautiful and natural emotions that support it. Though a teacher feels he knows how to improve a child's mind or life, he must not usurp the psychological and emotional needs of the child by imposing his will upon the child. Any instruction that is not willingly received or sought by a youngster has potentially damaging results. Ideally, the teacher should not pressure the child, and should impose on him as few rules as possible. The child should feel that wherever he gets to in his learning is a result of his own momentum. That is, he should be inspired to get there—not pushed, forced, prodded or pulled. As long as you are working with and not against the child's individuality, instincts, needs and inclinations, you are providing wind to his sails. The other way, you are providing the sails and expecting him to be the wind. You are simply trying to make the child into an image of yourself.

In my opinion, the teacher should actually encourage kids to find their own voices and ways of doing things as a coach might cheer on his athletes. The more intense, enthusiastic and individualistic the children are, the greater should be the teacher's joy. Once the teacher has helped to preserve and encourage the native instincts, natural inclinations, individualistic tendencies, untamed energy and power of his young students, he has something inspiring to work with. Then he has the fire, and need only apply the logs. Once he has helped to preserve and encourage the blaze that is prepared to burn up all obstacles, he may, with full confidence, tempt it with more sophisticated and articulate outlets; but outlets that do not diminish the power and energy of that blaze by a fraction.

Once the teacher sees that vitality, individuality, strength and

power are not lacking in his young students; that, indeed, each of them has experienced in himself a true lust and joy for life, a true freedom of expression and force of personality, he can envision his young students progressing great lengths and toward great ends. He can rest assured knowing that his young students know what power, pride, enthusiasm, and the intense pursuit of their own individuality are as they have already experienced them. They have found them in themselves, in the selves they understand, which are none other than their childish, unorganized, chaotic and undisciplined selves. Now these same qualities need only be applied within a more sophisticated framework. It does not really matter how long it takes before a teacher's presentation of more sophisticated things catches on; that is, before the child turns his individuality, energy and power in their direction. The thing of main importance is that the blaze, the momentum, the energy, the individuality, the integrity and the power native to childhood be preserved; and, somehow, encouraged.

Naturally, a group of youngsters so instructed would appear to some, or to many, to belong in reform school. Some people will say they are being allowed to be animals, that civilization is being defied. But truly enlightened people will take great pride in the children's vigor and freedom of expression. They will judge their activities by their context: that of childhood; and so, will not condemn them for lacking adult refinement.

In advocating freedom of expression for children, I am not advocating anarchy, nor am I in opposition to the idea of providing the lives of children with some structure as an aid in helping them to feel secure; or so that they will have a framework in which to conduct their activities, when that is needed. I am simply asserting that children have the right to live fully their lives as children and to do all the things that are natural for children to do. A child's life should be lived as he needs to live it, in such a way as pleases him. It should not be lived according to the way an adult decides it must be lived. And the learning that children do should be of their own choosing; and in harmony with their own needs, desires and growth patterns. Naturally, children should be taught to respect the rights and property of others in connection with all their own activities; but because they cannot yet be expected to be fully

responsible for their own behavior, I believe that many of their transgressions should be tolerated or forgiven.

In advocating freedom of expression for children, I do not mean to ignore other aspects of children's education. From the first, children should be helped to learn the basics of speaking, reading, writing and math so that they will have use of these essential tools. As soon as it becomes possible, the teacher should begin a program of teaching children a love for knowledge. Without a love for knowledge, they may have difficulty motivating themselves to learn.

Teaching children a love for knowledge means just what it says. It does not mean teaching kids to become or do anything other than to love knowledge. If a teacher can succeed at teaching kids to love knowledge, he will have done them one of the greatest services possible toward the end of making them good students. A good student is not one who learns when forced. A good student is first and foremost one who has a great and enduring love for knowledge, and pursues learning with the intensity and relentlessness of that love. And how does a teacher teach students to love knowledge? Well, firstly, he must have a very sincere and very great love for knowledge. If he does not, he is really wasting his time trying to teach it to his students, as they will see through him. Teaching someone to love knowledge is purely and simply an endeavor in esthetics: "Come, my students, and partake with me of some of the wonders of knowledge. I shall be your guide through a most astounding history of the achievements of humankind, the miracles of nature and the prospects for the future. Leave your drudgery behind, for this is a time to rejoice. Do not think I am here to try your wits or thrust any task upon you. I offer but a tour of joy, and all those open to see that which is worthy of appreciation need but look with me as I guide us along some of the more beautiful and clearly cut paths of knowledge." Such would be the teacher's approach and method. He would have no hidden motive. Indeed, it would not be any more of a drudgery than walking through a museum of knowledge or watching a documentary of knowledge. If students are not initially responsive to such a wide presentation, a teacher may elect to work with students individually to expand their appreciation of knowledge

along the lines of their interests or inclinations. After the teacher, with this method, has taught his students to truly love knowledge, it will be much easier for him to influence them to become precise and effective human beings.

In teaching children a love for knowledge, in helping them to learn the basics of reading, writing and math, or in instructing them at anything whatsoever; the teacher must always remember that, no matter how urgently he wants the child to become a precise and effective human being, learning is the student's adventure. The student must be given the responsibility for his edu ation right from the beginning. Right from the beginning, the teacher must instruct the student that, as a teacher, his role is limited and necessarily handicapped; that his job is to assist the student in his learning and development; that if the student is not making an effort to become involved in learning those skills and subjects which are of interest to him, the teacher cannot properly assist him.

In addition to trying to teach children a love of knowledge, trying to impart to them the basics of speaking, reading, writing and math, and trying to reinforce the habits, tendencies, needs and inclinations that are native to childhood, a teacher must teach children with some ultimate objectives in mind. In the first section of this book, I listed the ones I consider essential to each young student's education. One of those which I listed, if you will recall, is the student's need to be self-sufficient and manage his own affairs by the time he reaches eighteen years of age; or, sooner if his own circumstances require it of him. If growing up is to culminate in the ability to be self-sufficient and manage one's own affairs, it is logical and correct to conclude that the years of growing up, and the learning process itself, must be heavily weighted with those activities which challenge youngsters' decision-making capacities and tendencies toward self-sufficiency. This means that children, young students and emerging young adults should not be overly protected; but should be given every opportunity for trial and error, success and failure, in their various activities and choices; and should be expected to be responsible for themselves, and for their activities as students, in ever-increasing degrees. Adults should not intervene to do things for youngsters or emerging young adults,

nor make decisions for them, in matters they are capable of attempting on their own, even though their failure may be inevitable. Failure is but the first step toward success; and, if we are not permitted to fail, we can never hope to succeed. The decision-making process, and efforts at self-reliance and self-sufficiency, are relevant aspects of everything a youngster undertakes, including his formal education. If the decision-making process is denied to children, or is undermined or diluted by instructors or school administrators who think they know what is best concerning what and how children should study, children are being violated in two important ways. First, their freedom of choice is being taken away from them. They are being told that they do not have a right to do what they genuinely feel like doing and are inclined to do, even though doing it would hurt no one. This is wrong. Second, they are being deprived of the right to think things through and decide things for themselves. This prevents them from learning to manage their own affairs. It keeps them from growing up. The solution is to restore to all children *the right to select their own subject matter to be learned, and the right to design their own learning procedure*—with assistance provided by the teacher, if it is needed or sought. (I'll elaborate on this proposition in subsequent sections of this treatise.)

It is appalling to consider that children at home, young students, and emerging young adults in American society are treated similarly in that they are so often coddled, protected, provided for and decided for until they are finally expected to be on their own, think for themselves, make their own decisions and be self-sufficient. Because this is the case, it is not surprising that so many of our young people grow up being mixed up and confused in the handling of their own affairs, are ill-equipped to fend for themselves in the world; and wind up being a burden upon society instead of a credit to it.

This brings me once again to the second phase of a person's development—the *experience seeking* phase. After the child has really learned to express himself in terms of being a child, and has fully participated in childhood for whatever amount of time it is suitable for him to do so, he will be ready to focus his energies on seeking experiences. In the *orientation* phase, a child also seeks

experiences; but he does so more for the purpose of adjusting to his immediate surroundings than for reaching out beyond them. One might say that as a youngster grows up, he becomes less focused on adjusting to his immediate surroundings and more focused on experiencing what lies beyond them. This second phase of a person's development consists of exposing oneself to things on a large scale in order to give oneself a broad range of experience. The purpose of this is for the person to obtain enough experience to eventually be able to make mature decisions concerning what his goals will be, how he is going to live his life, and what values and principles he will adopt as his own. There are many experiences that cannot be considered worthwhile for this because they do not have anything to do with the essentials of life. Many experiences that do not, at first glance, seem relevant to the essentials of life may prove to be quite pertinent upon closer examination. Raising goldfish, for example, may seem to have little to do with the essentials of life. But if a young person learns from this a sense of responsibility, and learns to be more gentle and caring, its contributions to his overall value as a human being become obvious.

Obtaining experience is an art in itself. A person who is at the second phase of his development, that is, the *experience seeking* phase, must have a realization of how to efficiently go about obtaining experience. There seems to be a way of doing everything. There's a way to drive a car, a way to pilot a plane, a way to play football. What is the way of obtaining experience? It seems to me that the only way to be sure of obtaining a wide range of experience is to become an obtainer of experience; that is, obtaining experience must become one's chief activity. Obtaining experience as a regular and consistent activity requires a certain frame of mind. One must be adventurous and intensely curious. The basis for these attributes, if they are to be effective, must be good, solid reasons, such as wanting to know about people, about life and about oneself. With strong contact with such reasons in the foreground of one's thoughts, and a willingness to act upon them, one simply cannot avoid a fruitful experience seeking effort.

One who is attempting to gather experience should always look for and then pursue all the things and nuances of life with which

he feels any association until his association with each is resolved in his mind, or until his association with each has been dissolved or fulfilled. All of us run across incidents that move us, persons who intrigue or excite us, things that for one reason or another appeal to us; yet, how seldom it is that we catch ourselves at one of those moments and say to ourselves: "There's something going on here that has meaning to me out of the ordinary. It would seem to be wise to pursue it; for I may find out something new about myself, about people, about life; or I might find something for myself." Most of us are just not so attuned to the possibilities within things. This is because we are not in the first place on the lookout for dramatic involvement, for adventure, and for alternative forms of feeling, thinking and being. Perhaps we have a "nothing new under the sun" attitude. We feel that there is not much to be gained from new experiences.

I feel that if a person is not prepared to become involved, even to go on a long adventure, at the slightest nuance in life that he senses might be meant for him, he will never discover many truths and other things he was meant to discover. And if the young do not pursue anything and everything that intrigues or interests them, they will never approach an understanding of life's vastness, and they will never have a true feeling for its essence and limitations. Life is filled with potentials, accomplishments, abilities, things of use and things of esthetic value; but, to find these things, one must be on the lookout for them, and go look for them and investigate wherever they are thought to be. It is as though we are looking for the ends of their strings. Once we find the end of a string, we need only follow the string back to its beginning; and, along the way, we will find little pots of gold. Once in a while, a person is lucky and stumbles across the end of a long string when he isn't even looking for it; and, presto! his life is renewed. But we should not be so dependent upon the chances of fate. Sometimes weeks or months pass by without a person's coming in contact with something toward which he is personally moved. But when something of note finally occurs, when he gets a lead, then is the time for him to compensate for the drought with a vengence, becoming active to the hilt. He should not miss this chance.

In the second phase of a person's development, the teacher

should instruct the student to seek experiences. He should teach him that life is a great and wonderful adventure and that he, the student, is but a ship not yet embarked on the great sea of existence; that beauty, knowledge, grace and power lie awaiting him, but off in the farthest distances, far beyond the range of his present sight; that he must learn to see with the eyes of the world if he is to truly see. The teacher should inspire him to move on to new things frequently, and not to stagnate. He must teach the student that he must become a ship tossed about on the waves of life until he has developed a feel for those waves, as well as a knowledge of their movements, size, color and substance.

This brings me once again to the third phase of growing up, which I have termed the *deciding* phase. The third phase of a person's development consists of defining the contents of life; then determining what one's goals and aims will be, what one's lifestyle or way of life will be, and what one's principles and values will be. Naturally, some elements of these things have been decided already, or may be in the process of being decided; but there comes a time, and it's called adulthood, when each person must make an all-out effort to make conclusive decisions on all those things which will be pertinent to living a meaningful and successful life. At this third phase of his development, a person must take on a sober aspect as it is a time of severe concentration. He must decide what it is he will cement into his being; then live for, fight for and even die for. Every young person must sooner or later decide this. Upon making these ultimate decisions, he is an adult, for better or worse. If he fails to make decisions of this severity, if he never steps into the arena of consequence, if he never puts himself at the mercy of his opinions, his own conscience will consume him and he will die—perhaps not a physical death, but a spiritual one. He can put off making the great decisions for a long while, and may well be right to do so; but eventually he must take a stand. If he takes a stand and fails, he can still try again, having learned from his errors. But if he refuses to stand hard and fast with his whole being, if he cannot ever manage the will power and confidence to do it, he is doomed. In deciding in no uncertain terms what his convictions are and what he will do with his life, the student works internally and externally. He works on integrating and

understanding the various factors and facets that are himself, and on evaluating philosophies, points of view, facts, circumstances and situations. Whereas before he would go to things mainly for experience, now he must begin to perfect his understanding of them and relationship to them. He must strive to give each and every thing he considers important its meaning, its designated place in the scheme of things, and he must decide what his relationship to each will be. But how will he, the young person, not so long ago a child, arise and walk in the glory of adulthood: a fully comprehending and purposeful being? What miracles could possibly transpose him? Is this not expecting too much? How does a young seedling turn into a giant oak? How does a blind person learn to see like an eagle and a slow one learn to race like an antelope? How can this fledgling become a dynamo of power, thoroughly synchronized and well-directed? He faints at the strange and overwhelming exertions, the contortions of mind, the bizarre encounters that must precede such feats.

Time passes slowly and nervously for the student locked in decision-making of this severity. As it passes, the young student will become a victim of the pain of being suspended between nowhere and somewhere, with no solution in sight. This pain is likely to increase over time as he discovers that his struggles so often seem to be vain and unproductive efforts. Then, one day, after much time has passed, much energy has been expended and many struggles have been endured, some strange force seems to lift the student up and propel him forward toward his destiny. That force is himself; but it is some deeply hidden, unconscious part of him. It had been slowly gathering strength. The complexity of his motives elude him. He does not understand what is empowering him or where he is headed. He is one, two, ten steps ahead of himself; and learns to understand many of his decisions years later in retrospect. Had he the faintest idea of how far he would have to travel, he would never have begun the journey.

When he completes his great leaps forward, and sees all the ground he has traversed, he is awed, struck dumb, for he seems somehow to have been transported to a far advanced understanding and capacity. A deep, deep silence invades him: the stillness of eternity. In looking at his newly acquired past, he feels he is

looking at himself for the first time. He cannot fathom the depths of his own being. He is a great human being, a hero. He is not a hero in other people's eyes—he is a hero in his own eyes as he has mastered himself in terms of life! And now it is time for mature action. Our young person has become an adult, with a specific set of values and priorities, and a plan for his future.

In the third phase of a person's development, the teacher encourages the student to define the contents of life and decide what he will do with his life. In this connection, the teacher encourages the student to move toward increasingly bold commitments, and to be his own person in every way.

Likely, the goal toward which our new adult has decided to apply the bulk of his energies will require further preparation. Let us assume he wants to become a doctor. He is not a child who wants to become a doctor; he is an adult who wants to become a doctor. This is a very great difference! If he has learned his lessons well, he will proceed as follows... He will think long and hard about his decision. Having come to the conclusion that he wanted to be a doctor after much uncertainty, involving many months, or years, spent in gut-wrenching and emotional decision-making; he is certainly not going to let the matter just drop as though there were nothing more to it. Such questions will arise as: "Do I want to open up a practice of my own; or concentrate on bringing a knowledge of medicine to the level of the common man, so that each person will be better able to diagnose himself and prevent medical problems from developing, or what? If I want to work as a practicing physician, for whom do I wish to make my services available? Shall I be a pediatrician, or some other type of doctor? Until he has decided such questions, he will proceed cautiously; for this person is no fool. He knows that it is important for one to know, rather than to guess. He knows that the smallest decision, or lack of it, frequently has great consequences. He has learned this the hard way; and so, will definitely prepare himself.

As he knows the folly of blind obedience, our new adult will go to people of learning in the field when he, himself, has some learning in it, so that he will not be swallowed up by them. Ideally, he senses that to work with him with any degree of enthusiasm

or intensity, his teachers will have to take an interest in him; that it is therefore important that he be able to challenge them and interest them in their field to some degree before he confronts them as a student.

Since he is an adult, his teachers are going to have to prove themselves to him to some degree before he accepts them as teachers. With him, the teacher will not be able to get by with credentials alone. The teacher will have to have impact as a person, as a thinker and as a doctor.

This young adult will soon be ready to enter into a new drama: that of professional student. It will be his drama, and he should guard it jealously. He will guard it by putting himself at the wheel and allowing no other hands to touch it, not even for an instant. He does not know all that is in store for him, but he will be armed with fine instincts and approach as a result of his knowledge of life, and of himself. Soon he will start to expose himself to literature in his field, to judge for himself what is the wheat and what the chaff. This may not be smooth rolling. For a considerable length of time, his judgments will be crude and compulsive as he has little frame of reference within the area of his interest. Where personality shows through, he should be able to make judgments about the character of the authors he reads—this will be a great help to him. He will one day find an idol, only to throw him to the dogs later on. He will begin in one direction, only to reverse it the next day. His emotions will be involved, such that, when he has a bitter experience in his learning, he may be repelled from learning, even suspend it; and, when one conclusion tends to be leading to another which verifies it, he will glow with enthusiasm. But the first months to the first year or so may be a time of little success, filled with much wasted time and many disillusionments, which can be partially attributed to such things as capitalism and freedom of speech, for they are responsible for putting every kind of book in the marketplace, including many that have little or no value.

Since this young adult knows the feeling of progress, he is equipped to sense when things are going well. This is a tremendous asset. His intuitions can save him years of time and, in the long run, can direct him with astounding sensibility toward great achievements. But this is only because he has protected his instincts

from being exploited, and his individuality and identity from being invaded and disoriented by the demands and expectations of authoritative and controlling persons or institutions.

Ideally, he will try to approach his goal or goals within his field from as many different angles as possible, to avoid treating one small room of his field as the entire house; one of the worst kinds of traps, and about the hardest to have to confront.

In thinking about his motives and objectives in entering his field, he will constantly adapt his studies accordingly. In doing so, he will make many subtle studying decisions, each of which can have a great impact in the end. For example, if he knows that he wants to find cures for diseases, he will focus more on causes of disease than on perfecting common medical procedures. His initial goals and objectives, in this way, begin to blossom or may even become altered as he exercises them within the realities he confronts in his chosen area of interest.

Rather than assume patterns of investigation, he will look for them to be indicated. This is truly the scientist's mode of operation. It is an obvious extension of trying to come to terms with the meaning of things.

It is hoped that he will try to draw up his own philosophy of learning, and philosophy of specified activity along the lines of his interests within his area of study. The successful development of these philosophies, in connection with their actual usefulness and flexibility, is the best means of finding a true footing, and maintaining it on increasingly delicate ground as he moves forward in his learning.

Themes of study, major and minor, trends of awareness, and a listing of relevant conclusions, should be the issue of each day's work. However, if he feels bogged down in analysis, he may discard this method of operation for awhile in favor of a wild and unkempt bout of haphazard delving and reading, for his emotions, too, are an educated part of him.

This person will rely on his own observations and decisions to guide him in his learning and, whenever they cannot do the job, he will sharpen them. He is the ultimate type of student, as he is fully equipped in that capacity. If the whole world around him falters, he will still be a thoroughly competent student. His approach and attitude will carry him through.

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THE TEACHER–STUDENT RELATIONSHIP

The teacher is the servant of the student. Whatever the student is to become, it is out of himself that he must become it; which means that he must evolve. He must evolve naturally as a plant or tree evolves, growing up gradually and out of the material that is already him. Consequently, instruction by the teacher, if it is to be appropriate to the needs of the student, must occur in sensitive relationship to where the student is at in his thinking, feeling and being.

People are universally the same in their basic psychological, emotional and biological needs, experience many similar obstacles in growing up, and are similarly challenged by existing human conditions; but vary tremendously in their living conditions and circumstances, pattern of development, preferences of association, thought processes, philosophical beliefs, and manner of doing things. A teacher must have an accurate knowledge of the emotional and psychological need systems of the human being, a good knowledge of local and national conditions, and he must teach within the framework of that knowledge; but his teaching becomes applicable to a particular student in connection with the differences to which I have just referred. It is toward these differences that a teacher must direct himself if he is to have any hope of teaching effectively.

The teacher has the responsibility to those whom he would have as his students to find out where each one is at insofar as these differences are concerned. Perhaps the best way of accomplishing this is simply getting to know each other by means of comfortable vehicles, such as doing things together that both teacher and student enjoy, and talking about things of common interest. After the teacher feels he knows where a particular student is at according to the differences commonly found in people, keeping in mind the phase of development he is in; his next job is to formulate a program of instruction for the student. This should consist of the best of what he, the teacher, has to offer insofar as it can be applied to the learning needs of the student. Once this has been

satisfactorily accomplished, at least to the point at which a teacher feels he has some ground for proceeding in attempting to instruct a particular student, the teacher must always guard the sanctity of the point of intended departure. That is, he should never let his method of instruction or choice of subject matter violate the student's learning needs. While it seems incorrect to discourage a teacher from trying to change a student in the areas in which he has obvious need for improvement, the teacher must keep in mind that such attempts should be only a small portion of his relating to the student; for his job is not primarily to change students, but to *assist them* in their efforts at changing and improving themselves. The role of assisting the student comprises many different functions: encouraging, sympathizing, challenging, presenting new things, being an example, advising, depending on the changing needs of the particular student. The teacher must be flexible to the student's changing needs, and the classroom situation must be structured with this in mind.

As the teacher has certain teaching requirements placed on him by truth itself, truth places certain learning requirements on the person who wishes to be a student. It is up to the student to earn his self-respect as a student, and to earn respect as a student from anyone he would have as his teacher. The student should not expect a teacher to remain interested in him as a student if he does not respect his efforts as a student. A student who is not making an effort to motivate himself at, and formulate a direction in, his learning activities deserves little respect from a teacher or from himself (insofar as his capacity as student is concerned); because being able to direct oneself better, or at additional things, is the entire purpose of learning. The students most dedicated to learning to guide and direct themselves in their studies and life, and the students most accomplished at guiding and directing themselves in their studies and life, are the students who most inspire themselves to continue learning and who most inspire their teachers to give them all the assistance they can.

Just as the student has privileges in the teacher–student relationship—namely, the privilege of being related to by the teacher according to his unique development as an individual and specific learning needs; and the privilege of *selecting his own subject matter*

to be learned and learning procedure (I'll elaborate on this proposition in subsequent sections of this treatise.); the teacher has privileges in the teacher–student relationship. Those privileges are to teach what he wants, as he wants and when he wants, so long as he is not in violation of the student's individual learning needs and freedom of choice in doing so; and to teach whom he wants. In other words, he is servant only to the psychological and emotional make-up, living circumstances and basic freedoms of the students he chooses to teach, not to anyone other than those students; and, so long as he walks along this path in connection with those whom he chooses to teach, he need walk along no other path in his teaching.

THINKING FOR ONESELF

It is apparent that teachers, and those who intend to be good students, need to be proficient at thinking; a process commonly referred to as: *thinking for oneself.* It is less apparent, but equally true, that all the rest of us need to be proficient in the art of *thinking for oneself* if we are to lead happy and successful lives.

The average person has to deal with at least some problems in his own life every day; not necessarily always different problems, for some may be of an ongoing variety. I am not referring to trivial problems, like what color shirt to wear, or where to dine for supper. I am referring to problems we have in understanding, communicating, living harmoniously, fulfilling day to day needs, and accomplishing long-range objectives. The key to solving problems, or handling them as well as can be expected, is thinking; or, to be more precise: *thinking for oneself.*

A person who is accomplished at thinking for himself is one who, with consistent success, applies thought unassisted to enable things to be understood and constructively used. It's easy to say, but difficult to accomplish.

In every situation, or set of circumstances, there are things of more and less significance, and the selection of possible responses and possible actions that may be undertaken within that situation or set of circumstances are enormous. A person who thinks for himself can sort through alternatives and possibilities, and will wind up being able to relate to things intelligently and being able to proceed appropriately. He can do so because he has learned how to seek out and find the reality behind the appearances of things. This ability to get to the very bottom of things, or to see the very essence of things, is at the heart of being able to think for oneself.

A person who is successful at thinking for himself tends to take positions in thought and deed. He tends to put things in motion, slow their motion (not by a sluggish presence, but by pitting himself against their thrust), or increase their momentum. Due to his skill at assessing things and understanding them, his life can be very well organized; and his actions and behavior can be timely and appropriate within the context of the events and conditions going

on around him. Only because he sees things clearly, and understands them, is it possible for him to act with dexterity and power in his relationship to all the things he is confronted with in his daily life. The combined efforts of many people may not create a result equivalent to the result produced by his effort alone. This is because the thinking of a lot of people is diluted by inner conflicts and uncertainty, which interferes with their ability to follow a clear and definite program over the long term.

A person who is skilled at thinking for himself is nature's prodigy. He learns by watching nature in himself, in others; and in all things, both near him and far away. All the laws of life are natural laws and can be observed. The basis of all knowledge and science is, simply, nature.

If a person thinks for himself, truly, he will have the greatest potential for doing anything which life requires of him, or he requires of himself. Yet, if a person cannot think for himself, no skill, nor ability, nor assistance will be sufficient to enable him to manage his own life wisely and effectively. Being able to think for oneself is so essential that it is behind most of what is done well. Furthermore, the degree to which a thing is done well is likely a result of the degree to which a person can think for himself.

But you may disagree with me. You may argue that a person does not have to think for himself to do many things, such as things he already knows how to do, or things he does naturally. If this is what you believe, you will surely feel that you do not have to think for yourself to pick up a chair, as you already know how to do it. However, please consider that the chair may be in a crowded restaurant, and may be reserved for someone who is soon to return. Before you pick up the chair for the purpose of moving it to a nearby table where a chair is needed, for instance; you will have to think about how it will affect the person who is soon to return; and, consequently, you will have to weigh the pros and cons of picking up the chair. After weighing the pros and cons, you may decide that even though you need a chair so that you may sit down and eat your lunch; taking it, in this instance, would result in unpleasant repercussions that are not worth incurring. As a result, it is altogether feasible that you may elect not to pick up the chair after all. If the chair is in the home of a wealthy person,

and is valued as an antique, picking it up to move it into another room where a conversation is ongoing, and there is a shortage of seating, might disturb the residents; and, consequently, *thinking for oneself* might be required to avoid an unpleasant confrontation with the residents. Or, perhaps, you are thinking of picking up a chair so you can move it to a spot near an old girlfriend who you have just spotted sitting alone at a restaurant table set up for one, which has no additional seating in place. In this instance, you may have to think through many old feelings about your previous relationship with her before getting up the courage to pick up the chair so that you can place it next to her and sit down.

The point of these examples has been to show that there is simply no such thing as picking up a chair, nor doing anything, in a vacuum. There are always reasons for doing things and consequences for having done them. And, in coping with these, it is very often necessary to be able to think for oneself; and, sometimes, extensively even when performing the most simple of tasks, such as picking up a chair.

Certainly, you can see by my examples that the need to think for oneself shows itself everywhere, and with great frequency, even when attempting the most simple task; and you can see that sensible living is quite impossible without having arrived at some ability in the art of *thinking for oneself.*

Another of the incorrect beliefs concerning thinking is: *If a person has acquired a lot of facts, information and knowledge, he is automatically able to think for himself well, and effectively.* It sounds plausible; but, in reality, there is much more to the process of *thinking for oneself* than that. Having a lot of facts, information and knowledge simply does not guarantee a person can think for himself, either well or effectively. And that is because thinking does not come from a part of a person; nor from certain knowledge that he has, nor from a particular area of knowledge he is well versed at. Thinking is: *the ability of a person to conceptualize and understand as a whole and complete person participating in a whole and complete world.* When a person attempts to think for himself without having a thorough understanding of himself, and a comprehensive grasp of what is important in life, and how best to function successfully, morally and productively

within our world; the results of his trying to think for himself will fall far short of what will be required of him in life, even though he may be knowledgeable in some ways, or have a lot of expertise in one particular field or another. *Thinking for oneself*, then, refers to an ability that must be developed and mastered by a whole and complete person, who does not have a narrow and limited focus, and whose thinking skills are not limited to a single subject or to particular things he knows about. All of life must be the schoolroom, and all the essential things that make up life must be the subject matter, of someone who is going to one day be able to think for himself well and effectively. A person must always strive for a *total view of the total picture* if his thinking is one day to have a semblance of what is truly profound and meaningful in life. A person who thinks for himself well and effectively is, indeed, someone who has learned to understand himself, other people, and the things of importance within his immediate environment, and within the larger picture of the world as a whole. Going one step further, if the person who is good at thinking for himself is also to be a good person, he must be motivated to apply his awareness and understanding effectively for the betterment of others.

As you can see, *thinking for oneself* is a skill that is not easily accomplished. It is certainly not just something one happens upon; nor is it entirely a natural instinct. The potential for being able to think for oneself may be a natural instinct; but, before it can be said of a person that he is good at thinking for himself, his ability at thinking for himself must have undergone a tremendous amount of development. As one does not become an expert mountain climber on his first journey up a mountain, one is not, because he attempts to think for himself, automatically skilled at doing so.

Next, I'd like to present a set of prerequisites I have come up with that I feel are necessary if a person is to be able to think for himself successfully. First of all, a person must have a mind with *intelligent contents*. If he doesn't have very much good information, nor an abundance of meaningful life-experiences, to refer to and draw from; he is going to be ill-equipped to think for himself. As a race cannot be run well by a runner who is in poor health, good thinking cannot be done by a mind that has few concepts,

ideas and awarenesses of value. Next, those contents must be *well-integrated* so that the mind will be permitted to work in a coordinated manner. Isolated and unconnected bits of information and facts, and life-experiences that we have never fully comprehended or integrated into our overall view of things, are not helpful to us; and are really no more than a lot of excess baggage that is cumbersome and burdensome to us. Just as, for the purpose of driving a car, one's eyes, ears and hands must all be synchronized; to be good at *thinking for oneself*, the contents of one's mind must all be integrated and coordinated, so that the mind can apply itself in a synchronized manner. Now, if a person has these two qualities of mind: intelligent contents, and integration and coordination of those contents, it is still necessary that he have *supportive circumstances* for using his mind, and that he have *clarity and soundness of thinking procedure*, if he is to succeed at thinking for himself.

In connection with the idea of supportive circumstances, may I say that I consider it a truism that a person will think about things only to the extent that he can retain *faith* that his understanding will thereby increase, and that this increased understanding is something he can exercise within his circumstances, or within circumstances that are conceivably accessible to him. And, conversely, if a person cannot retain faith that his understanding will increase by thinking about things, or if he cannot believe that he can obtain the circumstances necessary to act upon increased understanding, he will have little desire to think about things seriously. I am trying to point out that even thinking, itself, is subject to the most practical considerations; and that a person's *current thinking ability* may not necessarily be an indication of his *true potential* to think for himself successfully or effectively. A person who sees himself hopelessly trapped in obligations or circumstances beyond his control will not begin to exercise his thinking capacity, even if it is excellent. Likewise, a person whose mind has been lying idle for a long time may become a fireball of inventiveness and competency with the incentive of a single plan or idea. If we want to be sure people will apply their minds; that is, try to think for themselves about things, we must show them how it can benefit them. Once they have a clear enough

and strong enough reason for thinking, we can rest assured that they will try very hard to think through even the most complex problems and circumstances, and that they will try very hard to guide their lives according to decisions based on depth and thoroughness of thought.

If a person is lacking certain insights, ideas or talents needed for proficiency in thinking, it may be said that he is his biggest obstacle in attempting to think for himself well and effectively. If you are such a person, be consoled that each of us was at one time a poor thinker. No child begins life by being good at thinking for himself. If trying to improve your ability at thinking for yourself seems frustrating at first, and seems to be yielding little beneficial results; be aware that this will change vastly for the better as you put yourself on a path of self-improvement. Each of us is the pair of glasses through which we see things and think about them, and as we improve ourselves—mentally, emotionally and morally—we are improving the prescription of the pair of glasses through which we see things and think about them; and our ability to think for ourself well and effectively will improve proportionately.

The raw material for *thinking for oneself* is points of reference. Points of reference are ideas or feelings about things. They are the things we think about, talk about, experiment with, observe, feel or react to in trying to get somewhere, do something or figure things out. It seems to me that people are often in the position of wishing to find additional points of reference, but are often dissatisfied with the results, or cannot arrive at even partially satisfactory results. Of course, oftentimes there is a lack of awareness of the need for additional points of reference.

Those who are flexible with their points of reference and, at the same time, committed to seeking additional and more meaningful points of reference, will have the most material to select from in attempting to think for themselves. Developing one's understanding in any area of knowledge, or about any facet of life, or developing any skill can only be done by finding additional points of reference; or, of course, by focusing in better on the ones we already have.

Learning to drive a car, for instance, is the process of accumu-

lating points of reference about driving a car. Even those people who don't know how to drive have some points of reference about driving cars that enable them to have a head start on the matter. They know the speed a car should go (one point of reference). They know that a car has a steering wheel to steer it, a gas pedal to increase or decrease the speed, and brakes to stop it (three more points of reference). They know that a car must stop at red lights and move forward on green lights (two more points of reference). Now, in learning to drive a car, they will learn facts and techniques or methods; and these facts and techniques or methods consist of, simply, more points of reference. A student driver will learn to maintain a safe distance from the cars in front of him, and he will be taught what is meant by safe distance at various speeds (all points of reference). He will be taught to look into the rear view mirror when slowing to a stop (another point of reference). He will be taught to check the tires to see if the tread is good, to make sure the windshield wipers are good and in working order; he will be taught to enter a freeway at a certain speed (more points of reference). He will be taught how much pressure to apply to the gas pedal, and how suddenly; how much pressure to apply to the brake pedal, and how suddenly; he will be taught when to change gears, to drive slowly around curves and corners, and that a lot of water on the road wets the brake drums and makes stopping difficult (facts and techniques consisting of points of reference). He will be taught how to park; how to signal turns, change lanes, merge with traffic and slow to a stop (more points of reference). In learning these additional points of reference, he is learning about driving a car; and, as the number of points of reference relevant to his driving a car increase in his awareness, his skill at driving a car increases. Likewise, lifestyle, behavior, perception, involvement, every form of action and thought are a result of the points of reference a person has; and the particular circumstances a person is in, or has access to, in which to make use of those points of reference. As relevant points of reference increase in quality and quantity, the potential to change circumstances, and to prosper from current circumstances and put them to productive use, becomes increasingly available. While this is clear in the example of learning to drive a car, it is not as obvious

in learning to live a healthy, happy, aware and productive life; but is nonetheless equally applicable. Consequently, those who do not find they are getting out of life, or putting into life, what they want to or what they should, had better consider increasing their points of reference, or improving the quality of usage of their current points of reference, so that they will have more or better material to work with in thinking about altering their current circumstances, or putting them to better use.

Points of reference can come from conversation, experiences, thinking, feeling, reactions, observation, experimentation, books or other media outlets: newspapers, television, radio and so forth. But one's own thoughts, feelings, reactions, observations, conversations, experiences and experiments are perhaps the most lucrative in acquiring new points of reference because it is with them that the person tunes in, so to speak. It is with one's own thoughts, feelings, reactions, observations, conversations, experiences and experiments that a person can make the most accurate, integrated and multifaceted connections with things, as they occur on the person's own ground and on his own terms. A person can read an excellent book that has nothing to do with his needs or his circumstances, for example; consequently, the book would be of little value to him. Whereas, if a person simply thinks, feels, reacts, observes, converses, experiences, and sets up his own experiments; he is going to be dealing with the kinds of things that pertain to and concern him.

Now, I am not trying to say that having various information, subjects and areas of study that are completely foreign to us, or that we have little interest in, thrust upon us by parents, teachers, schools, our supervisors at work, or by the demands of everyday life, are not worthwhile; for, sometimes we may benefit from it greatly. But, a lot of the time, it is far superior to let a person seek his own points of contact, and find his own things to become involved in, because we can then at least be assured that there is a legitimate reason for the person to be connected and involved with them.

Perpetually exposing a student to things in behalf of the inclinations or judgment of others, as is done in schools in America today, falls extremely short of the ideal, as it is far more impor-

tant to expose him most frequently to *his own* feelings, reactions, thoughts, observations, conversations, experiences, and experiments; a process truly secure only when promoted by the student's own initiative. The danger of a learning regime established by others, whereby one is expected always to adhere faithfully to the rules and expectations of others, such as teachers, parents, or school administrators, is that the entire learning process is then being foisted upon the student without reference to his needs, wants or natural inclinations. This practice, not surprisingly, may result in a justified and bitter resentment toward the learning process; or, if much learning takes place under the guidelines and auspices of such a method of teaching, it may well be unfortunate that it has, because such teaching may produce in a student an alienation from all that is natural and true for him. It is apparent to me that bitterness and resentment toward learning, and alienation from oneself, are greatly fostered and encouraged by the very educational process that is most often promoted and adhered to by American schools.

Having discussed the raw material for thinking for oneself, which I referred to as points of reference, I would now like to present my thoughts on the subject of deciding what it is we shall think for ourselves about. Here are five things that I feel a person should ask himself about something he is considering thinking for himself about, if he is to do so effectively and in a way that is true for him. In honestly answering these five questions, a person can at least have a yardstick for measuring and evaluating the suitability of things he wishes to think for himself about.

(1) Is it a thing of good quality?
(2) Does it apply to me? (Is it really something I can constructively identify with?)
(3) Am I prepared to think for myself about it at this time?
(4) Is its form of presentation the one I can best relate to in thinking for myself about it?
(5) How should I approach thinking for myself about it?

In deciding if something is a thing of good quality, one must first be able to sense its presence. This can be done through a methodical reasoning process, or simply by using one's gut level feelings. Next, one has to isolate it from the material with which

it is associated or commingled. In isolating something, one may find that he has only a part of a thing; in which case, the rest of it would have to be constructed. In isolating a thing, one may find that it is in damaged form; in which case, it would have to be repaired. In isolating a thing, one may find that he has only the raw material for something; in which case, it would have to be built or formed out of the raw material. After something has thus been isolated in its complete form, or isolated and then turned into its complete form, one is able to ask the question, "Is it a legitimate thing, a real thing?" Once it is determined that the thing isolated is in its complete form, and is also a legitimate thing, a real thing, one is finally in a position to try to ascertain its actual quality. The quality of a piece of information or knowledge is determined by measuring its usefulness and applicability to the human situation.

In asking oneself the question, "Does it apply to me?" it is, of course, necessary for a person to have a good sense of himself; that is, of his values, preferences, interests and capabilities. If a person has a good idea of what he is, and knows what the thing he is considering consists of—as determined by question (1), he should have no problem in deciding to what extent it applies to him. But if the person is vague about his own essence, or about the essence of the thing he is considering, I see no way of determining to what extent the thing applies to him.

As to question (3), it is of course plausible that while something really does apply to a person, the person is just not ready to become involved with it. This could be for countless, varying reasons: circumstances, state of mind, things of prior importance, etc. In such a situation, the person must decide if he will file the thing away for future review or if he will let it slip away into the oblivion of forgotten memories.

As to question (4), things can be in countless different forms. The form of a thing that is good for one person to relate to may not be the form of it that is good for another person to relate to. In buying wall paint, for example, one person may want blue, while another wants yellow. Both may be buying the same brand of wall paint, but they each want it in a different form. The same type of thing occurs where things to be thought about are concerned.

If a thing applies to a person, and he is ready to think for himself about it, he may find its form not to his taste or not suitable to his needs. So he should alter it to a more suitable form before proceeding with it. For example, suppose the thing that was isolated was the statement that Napoleon was an interesting man. "Interesting man" can be put into many different forms for the convenience of the person who is thinking about it: brilliant, groovy, well-rounded, colorful despite his wickedness, and so on. A person should alter the fact into the form that best suits him before thinking for himself about why it is so, what he shall do with the information, etc.

As to question (5), as the form of something may vary, so may one's approach to it. Approach can encompass things such as how frequently one will associate with it, toward what end, what one will associate it with, etc. In *thinking for oneself* about something, result has a great deal to do with approach. For example, if a person picks the wrong purpose for thinking about something that really does apply to him, I do not see how the results could be positive. Likewise, if he associates with it too little or too much, the result cannot be as good as it should be.

I hope that this essay will encourage students and educators to give more importance to learning to *think for oneself*, and less importance to the accumulation of facts, information, or even skills. For, although the accumulation of information, facts and skills is important, as long as they pertain to a student's interests and needs; they are useless in the hands of someone who cannot think for himself. I also hope this essay can encourage those people who are not educators or students to acquire a proficiency at *thinking for oneself*, if they have not done so already; because a proficiency at *thinking for oneself* can vastly improve each person's ability to make life a meaningful, productive and rewarding experience.

THREE TASKS

There are many things a youngster must learn if he is going to become a capable adult. Reading, writing and basic math skills are essential, as everyone knows. But being skilled at reading, writing and basic math do not equip a student to find his way in the world. For this purpose, becoming accomplished at three tasks will give him a good start at being able to conduct himself successfully in the world. Those three tasks are inherited by each student, and must be mastered if a student is to move forward in life in a meaningful way. They are:

(1) To learn to observe for the purpose of understanding the true content and meaning of things. (I referred to this in the section on THINKING FOR ONESELF.)

(2) To develop a worthwhile concept of the meaning of life to him.

(3) To learn to maneuver well in his environment.

Fulfilling task number one indicates balance, fulfilling number two indicates direction, and fulfilling number three indicates mobility. I shall now elaborate on each of these three tasks in the order first presented.

To accomplish task (1), a person must attempt to observe things *accurately* and *thoroughly*. This is the very first task a thinking person must undertake who wishes to keep his feet firmly planted on the road to understanding and enlightenment. If a person cannot properly analyze and understand what he perceives, of what good is he as a student of ideas, information or even skills? A person should try and perfect his perceptual skills before attempting any fast or efficient acquisition of information, skills or ideas. A person should not try to master things that are extremely complex before his perceptual skills have proven themselves in connection with the things to be found in his personal circumstances and immediate environment.

Accurate and *thorough* observing is a form of studying, but it is a process far different from the process of studying that is common in most American schools. *Accurate* and *thorough* observing is the process of studying things in great depth. Such observing is a one-to-one encounter with something without distractions.

It is dynamic. The rules of the encounter are created by the observer and the observed. It is going on a private adventure with something. It is getting inside of something and finding a whole world vibrant with possibilities. You lift the thing up and look at it, in the dark, in the sunlight, in cold weather, in hot weather. You drop it, throw it. You ponder it from a hundred different angles. You become its ever-watchful friend. In time, it begins to reveal to you its essence as if it were rewarding you.

Since such observing is an attempt to account for something in its entirety, it is oftentimes a slow moving and sparsely happening process, though nonetheless dynamic, until one manages his way into the heart of an issue or phenomenon. It consists of sifting and comparing and measuring and experimenting for as long as may be necessary. This type of activity requires a certain habit of mind far unlike the habits of mind fostered by contemporary studying requirements. Contemporary students in America flit and fly from one point to the next, from one assignment to the next, from one lecture room to the other. They have little time to inspect a thing closely, to really become absorbed in it. They are taught not to be in-depth observers. They are taught that examining things in great depth wastes time and is a hindrance to getting things done.

All the things a person will do will be done within the context of his concept of the meaning of life, which brings me to an elaboration of task (2). If a person's concept of the meaning of life is a drab one that does not inspire him, or if his concept of the meaning of life simply confuses him, his learning will resemble the movement of a train heading somewhere without any tracks along which to travel. Once a person begins to formulate a worthwhile concept of the meaning of life that he is able to relate to and proceed from with comfort and satisfaction, his life begins to have for him a full significance. Then he can try to represent his concept of the meaning of life in his thoughts and deeds; in other words, he can try to act on what he knows, as he now has a valid framework in which to do so. Further learning will include improving his concept of the meaning of life; and learning to represent it in the direction of his studies, and in his thoughts and deeds. Learning that occurs out of the context of one's concept of the meaning of life

takes place as so much deadweight, and competes with a person's identity, sensitivity and integrity. A student's development and studies must, from the very first and thereafter, be geared in every respect toward his developing and acting upon a worthwhile concept of the meaning of life.

Task (3), maneuvering well in one's environment, is possible only if a person has a *participating knowledge* of what his environment consists of, and how to make the best use of it. It is actually one step beyond observing. It is making observations work for you in applied situations; but, it is more, for it is also having enough correct observations about the important elements in your environment to enable you to handle your entire environmental circumstances with a skill which approximates success. (By environment is meant: the environment common to all human beings and the local environment common to the people in your town or city.)

MOVING THE ENTIRE PERSON FORWARD

What is ordinarily considered higher education: college level, should be peopled with individuals who are becoming accomplished at tasks one, two and three. This is the minimum with which education can proceed on an adult level. Without some proficiency at these three tasks, a person is still a cripple; and will become but an educated cripple if he attempts to move forward in his education without their assistance. Prior to achieving some proficiency at these three tasks, reaching for sophisticated learning goals and objectives brings to mind an amateur swimmer who has assigned himself the task of swimming the Atlantic. And this is not an overstatement. Having a mind that works well in certain areas, or at certain ideas or skills, but is not proficient in the various tasks and responsibilities that life requires of us all (among which are tasks one, two and three), can be compared to being a rich man who is surrounded by robbers. It is like continually acquiring money that is continually being stolen. What good is it to brag about the beauty of the paintings in one's house if one's house has no roof? What good is it to start on a trip at a time when one has just taken ill? In the end, the money will be gone, the paintings will be ruined and the trip will be a failure. If a man has a car, he does not attend only to the tires and disregard the rest of the car. If he wants to have a car that works, he attends equally to all its working parts. He knows that it is of little significance to have a transmission in perfect working condition if the engine is faulty. He knows that a perfect engine and transmission are insignificant if the battery is on its last legs; and that if any one of many hundreds of parts ceases to work, the car is useless. It is the same with living. If a man has the ability to do something, but cannot find the desire, the ability is worthless. If a man cannot sort out his life so that he is at peace with himself, his talents and desire will be hindered. If a man does not know what to do with his free time, the time that is not free will be affected. If a man has a lot of difficulty using one of his emotions, all the man's strength will be chained to that weakness. He cannot run because

a part of him barely knows how to crawl. If a man loses part of his respect for himself, the fact that he is able may be of little consequence; as he may avoid the effort necessary to succeed because of his attitude toward himself. It seems that it takes only one little plug to let out the entire bath water.

Does a man move forward with his feet, and leave his arms behind? Such a man would be absurd! It is equally absurd for a man to move forward in engineering, law, medicine, skill at business, or whatever without moving forward in all aspects of life.

Let us, then, establish that a person who is excellent at something is not for this to receive final praise. Not until a study has been made of his degree of competency at the rest of life, with the results showing an excellence there also, will he be fully congratulated. Let us also establish that the idea in education is to move the *entire person* forward. To move the entire person forward, a total approach to living is required. We need to know what the important requirements are for living a full and responsible life; and, above all else, encourage the student toward a mastery of those requirements. The key in accomplishing this is getting to know and understand oneself, people in general, one's environment and circumstances, the ways of the world, and the various values and principles which add meaning and purpose to life. For, if one has a good understanding of these things, he will then be able to see what is required of him to function smoothly, meaningfully and productively in life, and to progress in whatever direction he chooses.

In getting to understand oneself, people in general, one's environment and circumstances, the ways of the world, and the various values and principles which add meaning and purpose to life, one has to seek answers to thousands of different questions, questions such as the following ones. "What types of people should I associate with? How much of my time should I spend engaged in social activities, relaxation and having fun? If I don't like a person, must I tell that person so—is that one of the things that is meant by honesty? To what extent should I allow compassion to motivate me; and at what points can I turn away from the needs of others so that I may attend to my own needs? How long can I remain idle, and without purpose, before I should feel warned? Is doing nothing at all a therapeutic form of existence with many hidden

potentials? What are the virtues of capitalism, of socialism? What are the things of most importance in life? What are the things I need to be happy from day to day? Who are the persons, living or dead, most worthy of emulation? Does every person fall in love at least once in their lifetime, and is it necessary to fall in love in order to live a happy life? Are the local living conditions and circumstances which the average person confronts from day to day of sufficient quality to enable him to have a fair opportunity to live a wholesome, happy and productive life?"

As you can see, learning to understand all that is necessary in order to live a full and responsible life is a truly complicated job. It is so complicated that only a wide range of experience, a great deal of examining, analyzing and evaluating, and a great willingness to seriously consider beliefs and opinions which differ from one's own can permit one the opportunity of succeeding at it.

Teachers should assist students in this most important undertaking by making sure that their teaching is aimed at advancing the awareness and ability of the total person. Ordinarily, education in America is not concerned with the student's development as a total person. This becomes obvious when one considers the fact that students are not tested or graded in their skills or knowledge insofar as they can be represented by the total person.

In evaluating the learning progress of the total person, as opposed to the learning progress of a part of the person, many concerns arise which are usually not considered to be relevant to the learning process; such as:

(1) Are the student's motives for learning clear in his own mind?

(2) Is the student ready for more learning, or should other things precede it?

(3) Is the student picking the right things to learn?

(4) Is the student internalizing the things he is learning in a healthy way?

(5) Does the student find enough applications for what he is learning, so that he is truly living it; or is his learning a stagnant part of him, and an irritant in his life?

In looking at the progress of the total person with such things in mind, one may run across any number of things. It may be found

that a student is undergoing some anxiety or other; and, rather than add to the confusion, his mind should first be put in order, however long it may take, before further learning occurs. It may be found that the student is particularly lacking in an area of life that has nothing to do with what he is studying; and he should first attend to that inadequacy. It may be found that a student's motives for acquiring certain knowledge are unclear in his mind, which would mean that the knowledge would be learned in a faulty fashion. Therefore, the student would have to attend to clarifying his motives before continuing his other learning activities. It may be found that a student is learning much that is unnecessary for him to learn, thereby wasting his time and crowding his life with that which is superfluous to it. It may be that he adapts better to a different method of learning or to different learning conditions. It may be that his desire to learn is not strong enough, and would therefore have to be investigated; that it would be more important for him to investigate it than to continue his other learning activities.

If this very personal approach to education, which is necessary if education is to represent the forward movement of the entire person, is to be implemented, a host of additional realizations must be documented for the purpose. The rest of this treatise will consist of pertinent additional realizations that have occurred to me.

THE NECESSITY TO ASSOCIATE IN A POSITIVE MANNER

Next, I'd like to present the concept: "It is necessary for a person to associate with things in a manner that affects him in a positive way; in other words, in a way that constitutes *a positive life experience*."

There is a school of thought which theorizes that human beings are tough, or should be; and that they should be able to make sacrifices, endure hardships, make compromises and adapt to all sorts of conditions and circumstances that are unfriendly to their nature. While it is true that people can adapt to many different kinds of situations and circumstances, it is also true that human nature is sensitive and fragile in many ways; and when a person accepts, or adapts to, an uncomfortable situation or set of circumstances, it eventually takes a toll on his well-being and peace of mind.

Why wait for the inevitable to happen? Why wait for disintegration, collapse, illness, depression, or misery? When we understand the conditions and circumstances which favor human well-being, happiness and progress, we must insist upon them. Though we may not always be able to have what we want, or what we seek, still we should never completely accept what we know to be alien to our nature.

There are three good indicators that can be used to determine if the learning experiences of students in our schools constitute "positive life experiences"; or if they are, in fact, alien to human nature. When the three indicators are adhered to, the educational experience is beneficial; and when they are abandoned, the educational experience is suspect. These three indicators will seem ill-conceived and incorrect to those who have been trained that the primary responsibility of a student is to do what educators tell him to do. The three indicators are:

(1) Focusing: The freedom to choose what one will focus one's attention on within the learning process.

(2) Self-identification: The freedom to choose what one will become personally associated with in the learning process.

(3) Procedure: The freedom to choose how one will proceed in becoming personally associated or involved with things within the learning process.

If a person, for whatever reason, chooses to put his foot in one direction or on a certain spot when he is walking, we realize that no one has a right to tell him that he cannot. We also realize that if every time a person took a step, he was subjected to the interjection of another's rules for how he should go about doing it, he would soon lose the desire to walk as it would be too burdensome and cumbersome. It is this very feeling of being burdened and encumbered that a person must necessarily feel when there is a steady diet of rules and expectations thrust upon him in his learning. And his reaction to a continual regime of rules, expectations and guidelines in connection with his learning activities must, likewise, generate a loss of desire to learn.

It is a strange fact that, although loss of desire to learn should occur in proportion equal to the intensity and extent of outside rules, directives and expectations, just as in the case of being told where to put your feet when you are walking, loss of desire to learn does not necessarily cause a person to cease participating in the learning process. People may actively participate in the learning process while having lost a good deal, or all, of their desire to learn. They do not then, of course, participate in a constructive manner. I believe that this phenomenon is a prolific occurrence in the educational institutions of the world. Education which occurs within the "freedom to choose" range, as detailed in numbers (1), (2) and (3) earlier in this essay, has the best potential for constructive results. All forms of compulsory education are suspect.

If a person is in the process of reading a book, he may decide he does not want to continue reading it. The reasons may well be complex, but right or wrong, complex or simple, they are his reasons; and, must therefore be respected. If the person is a student trying to pass a course, and it is necessary for him to read the book to do so, he will, if he wishes not to read any more of it, be impressed with the fact that the way he feels toward something is not the way he may conduct himself toward it; at least, not in his capacity as student. This is a lesson in anti-life. It can

be a cruel lesson with bitter consequences. It is as if he is being told: "It does not behoove your future for you to be yourself." This lesson, I'm afraid, is drummed into the conscious and unconscious minds of students around the world, daily stabbing into their identity and damaging their free spirit. The student who is often imposed upon by his instructor's requirements of him, and by school policy, must admit to himself that his studies are not in favor of his immediate sense of well-being. He will then construct walls of negative attitudes between himself and his studies, protecting himself from deep involvement with them. He will participate in them with only one foot or a few toes in, and will learn to practice the illusion of involvement to pacify the necessary persons or to conform to prevailing policies, using up much of his time and energy in this worthless maneuver. Or he will take the alternative route, and truly become involved in his studies at the expense of his integrity, causing disrespect for himself to develop within himself, and causing alienation from himself to develop. While he will be doing his studies as expected, he will resent them; and this resentment will eventually break his will as a student of the present type, or as a person, or both. Or else, he will remain forever stranded between being unreal as a student and real as a person.

A person breathes at his own rate; he looks where he chooses to look; he sits where he chooses to sit; he speaks when he chooses to speak; he laughs when he chooses; he gets angry when it suits him; he sleeps when he chooses; he says what he wants to say; he responds as he wants to respond; he eats when he wants to eat. What does this tell us? It tells us that it is a fundamental part of being human to be and do what you want, when you want, as you want. This truth holds for every activity a person engages in, including learning.

Would a man build a chair for himself if someone stood behind him telling him where to hit with a hammer, how and when to swing it with each blow? Of course not! Then why should a person build a life for himself out of being told what books to read, when to read them, what courses to take, what lectures to attend, how to act in the lecture room, what tests to take, when to take them, and so forth?

Let us say, for the purpose of elaborating on my point, that I am a student and must take a history test. I am required to know about a certain war and all the events pertinent to it. In reading assigned books on the subject, I come upon a certain date that I know is important to be remembered in connection with that war. I would not simply remember the date as I am supposed to, for, I am not just a student studying for a test. I am also a person. Anything could run through my mind, perhaps something like: "I have more urgent and more esthetic things to concern myself with than remembering that date. I'll forget it in two weeks anyway. It will block out some other thought that I may prefer to think. I have difficulty seeing the reasons for remembering all those things about the war anyway. I can see that it is nice to know it happened; but, beyond that, what does it have to do with my interests?"

Do you think a person reacting in this way to his studies can benefit from them? Can you see that such reactions will have serious consequences to the student's life if he continues to pursue his studies under the same conditions? There is no such person as a student who does not react to his studies. The important thing is to determine how he is reacting. Not just a simple determination, but all the precise feelings and thoughts he has about them. It is only when his reactions to his studies are specifically determined that we can begin to have a true idea of what his studies are doing to him, if they are harming him or not. And, remember, pain can be an unconscious phenomenon; hence, first impressions, even the student's own responses, are not necessarily to be trusted in this regard.

Don't you think it is time we find out what current studying habits are doing to students? What if, all along, millions of students all over the world have been accumulating negative attitudes toward themselves to the extent that they have become knowledgeable under current educational methods? What if learning by "doing what one is told to do," as is currently the norm in American schools, has all along influenced the student away from a sensitivity to his own nature, and discouraged him from developing into what he is most suited to be; causing him to be a failure, though a success by false standards? I maintain that this has happened to millions of students in schools throughout the world, and is still

happening to millions of students.

The idea is for each person to relate to things in a way that suits his nature and state of mind. This is the only truly healthy manner of associating with anything.

An important aspect of this philosophy is that one should relate to things at the point of strongest interest or strongest emotion. Not relating to things at the point of strongest interest or strongest emotion can be compared to playing tennis with one who is far your inferior at the game, or having the ability to leap high fences and being shown only low ones. It just cannot begin to motivate the person to do his best or to find true joy in what he is doing. Methods of instruction contrary to this principle abound in every form of education, ranging from teaching music to instructing employees. To be properly motivated at playing the piano, for example, a person should relate to the piano at the point of strongest emotion and most pure feeling. For him to do less is to deny himself contact with himself where he intuitively most desires it, where the piano is concerned. Since it is the esthetics of playing the piano that will turn the person on, it is from this point that he should become involved with it. He should be motivated to the piano via his esthetic reactions to its sounds. He should grow in his ability to play the piano via his esthetic involvement with its sounds. The way piano should be taught, I feel, is to teach students to become involved with their esthetic reactions to its sounds; rather than by teaching them just to *replicate sounds* other people have created in the form of compositions, or by ushering them with endless prodding through a stream of totally boring finger exercises. This latter mode of instruction is a dominant practice in piano teaching around the world; and instruction in all the arts, especially the performing arts, is dominated by a similar type of teaching, revealing a dearth of respect for beauty, resulting in an immense destruction of beauty in the hearts of millions of people by careless and foolish persons around the world who think they understand; but do not understand, art.

If a desire to *replicate sounds* on the piano is a product of the student's esthetic involvement with the piano, he will then replicate those sounds he feels motivated to replicate, and in the manner he feels motivated to replicate them. In this way, practicing piano

techniques and learning musical compositions become very real and natural endeavors. In this way, the spirit of art is not defiled in the acquiring of technical artistic skills.

Though I am not a musician, I can imagine myself teaching piano according to the principles of instruction I have formulated. For a literary demonstration of how I would do this, I shall make the subject a little boy named Johnny. Johnny's mother has just brought Johnny to his first piano lesson. He is to be tutored privately in the instructor's home; and the three of them are just getting acquainted.

Mother: "I have brought Johnny here because I want him to learn to play the piano."

Instructor: "Does he want to play the piano? Does he know what it can offer him?"

Mother: "I think so."

Instructor: "Come here, Johnny. Let's talk about the piano... The piano is an instrument through which you can talk about how you feel. If you feel sad, you can show it on the piano. If you feel happy, you can show it on the piano. If you feel angry, you can show that on the piano too... You like pretty things, don't you? And fun things? Well, you can create both on the piano simply by touching it in different places. Come, I'll show you." *(Takes boy over to the piano.)* "The things that say what you feel inside of you, and that say pretty and fun things are these things. They're called keys. Try hitting them with your fingers and see what happens. ...If you like doing it, your mother will bring you to me once a week and we can do it together... I would like to help you learn how to make it say what you want it to. And I want you to see how it can surprise you and say very nice things you never planned it to say. And how it can speak to you about things you never knew about. The piano can actually teach you, did you know that? But if you want to learn about playing the piano, you must always remember never to play it except when it is your friend. It is fine not to like something, and say it on the piano; but, you must never try to speak on the piano, or let it speak to you, when you feel that you do not like the piano. The piano is not to hurt you, and you are not to hurt the piano... Now, see if you can say something that you want to say. See if the sounds you hear excite you. As long

as you enjoy making the sounds, you should make them. If you do not enjoy making them, you should stop." *(To mother):* "I wish him to develop a spirited relationship between himself and the keys, independent of me. He and the piano must discover each other. Once I can see they are beginning to get along, I can make suggestions to him as to how I feel he can improve his relationship with the piano; though with this type of instruction, one never knows how the student will react to suggestions from the teacher. Once in awhile, the teacher is left out right from the beginning, and the student and piano guard the privacy of their relationship as intensely as two jealous lovers. If this happens to your child, you will be very lucky, indeed; for it will indicate he has found a method of making the piano work for him; for his feelings, thoughts and needs, which is really what we are after anyway... His first few lessons will consist of simply encouraging him to pound away on the keys to his heart's content, and encouraging him to pick out interesting or pleasing sounds. You may not see the wisdom of this; but, I assure you, it is the most dynamic and personal introduction to the piano possible. Later, he and I will work together in discovering a way we can blend the things I have to teach with his learning needs, interests and inclinations. I will always make an effort to teach him the compositions or techniques which he will find inspiring, challenging and enjoyable. If his lessons cease to be enjoyable to him; either I am not being a successful teacher, or he has become uninterested in what I have to offer, and we will have to reassess our relationship with each other at that time."

QUALITY OF KNOWING

The next thing I would like to present on educating the entire person, as opposed to educating simply a part of him, is quality of knowing. Quality of knowing, as I view it, comprises four aspects: bookkeeping, integration of the contents of the mind, application of the contents of the mind to the person's life, intrinsic quality of the contents of the mind.

(1) *Bookkeeping*: Think about how many different philosophies, beliefs and points of view each of us is exposed to during our lifetime. Many times, those who are proponents of a point of view, or system of beliefs, offer convincing arguments which sway our thinking. And think about how many different moods each of us is inclined to become immersed in, and about the fact that one's thoughts and feelings about things may vary with one's moods. Next, think about how people's opinions and feelings about things can change from time to time as they grow up and mature. Next, consider the fact that people are often unclear about some of their own beliefs, interests or choice of direction in life simply because they have not yet fully decided about them. Lastly, think about the fact that the human mind is constantly acquiring new impressions, new information and new experiences; while forgetting about other impressions, other information and other experiences that it once focused upon. I have asked you to consider these things to enable me to be more convincing in pointing out that the contents of the human mind is tremendously varied, subtle and complex. All this having been said, I hope I have layed a sufficient foundation to introduce two rather incredible concepts for your consideration, which you may have otherwise rejected at the outset. Those concepts are: *If we are to be able to find things in our mind, we must know where we put them;* and, *if we are to know the use of things in our mind, we must be clear about why we put them there in the first place.* I'm sure that most people will tend to agree that the mind is the storing place for what we know; and, most will probably agree that the mind is not a trained secretary, automatically organizing and filing incoming ideas, information and impressions for us; nonetheless, most people will think

that such concern over where we have put a thing in our mind, or over why we put it in, is surrealistic and doesn't really apply to life. And, I'm sure most people believe that a person never goes wandering around in his mind looking for the place he has put something, and a person never says to himself, "Hmm, now what's that doing in my mind? I wonder why I put it there?"

It is true that people rarely think about the contents of their mind in these terms. But the fact that people do not consciously go wandering in their mind looking for the place they have put something, and do not consciously question the use for things in their mind, does not prove that they have no need to periodically examine the contents of their mind; and revise, change, reorganize and reclassify those contents. Because the contents of a human mind is of tremendous quantity, and is enormously varied, subtle and complex; I believe that there is no way of keeping up a good rapport with it, or of coping with it, without a highly refined system of organization and great sophistication of definition of those contents. In addition, I believe that we must periodically do a spring cleaning of the contents of our mind, and dispose of much that is no longer needed. When doing that, we must also reorganize, reshape and revise the remaining contents, as needed. A person's mind can be a treasure chest filled with wonderful things, or a junkheap of useless information and inferior opinions, depending upon how skillfully and conscientiously he does his job of being the caretaker of its contents.

(2) *Integration of the contents of the mind:* Since making use of a piece of information or knowledge within our mind is done by our whole mind, it is necessary for what we know to be an integrated part of our mind if our mind is to be able to relate to it effectively. As an aid in showing that this is true, I'd like to ask you, the reader, to accept the proposition that there exists in a particular person's mind a piece of information or knowledge that is quite intact and worthwhile; however, it has not been integrated into the way his particular mind is organized, and into the way his particular mind works. Consequently, while the piece of information or knowledge adequately represents something valid and useful, and perhaps something substantial, it is not actually a usable part of that person's mind. For all practical purposes, then, it is

a useless appendage of his mind. Facts, ideas, information, feelings about things, awarenesses, even skills are all useless to a person until they become integrated into the existing contents of his mind, and into the way his particular mind works. It is essential, then, that the various contents of one's mind be well organized and combined into an integrated way of viewing things and acting upon them; and if they cannot be, they should be forgotten or unlearned.

(3) *Application of the contents of the mind to the person's life:* A person may know things that are legitimate, valid and worthwhile in themselves; yet, which do not apply to his life; meaning that they do not apply to who he is, how he thinks, what he does nor how he lives. A person may know things which, though appropriate for someone else to know, are obstacles and impediments in his life. Having unnecessary knowledge, or an excess of knowledge, is just as inappropriate as having poor knowledge or an inadequate amount of knowledge.

If a person plans a trip, he will select clothes, personal effects and other items suitable for the type of trip he has planned. If it is to be a sightseeing trip, he may want a camera. If it is to be a business trip, he may want to bring along his briefcase. If it is to be a trip for therapeutic reasons—to relax his nerves and obtain a measure of peace and quiet, away from the loud and overcrowded city and the bustling and hectic activity of the daily workweek; he may want to bring along a fishing rod and a few good books. But his selection of things to take with him will be different for each different type of trip he has planned. In like fashion, a person should select to learn those types of things that are suitable for the type of mind he has, and the type of life he is in the midst of living, or wishes to live in the not too distant future. If the things he is learning do not properly apply to his life, he will one day wake up to find himself ill-prepared for the life he is living, or wishes to live, in spite of all the knowledge he has acquired, even though it may be impressive in content and quality.

In learning, then, we must look not for quantity, nor simply for quality; but for suitability to our own needs, talents and abilities.

(4) *Intrinsic quality of the contents of the mind:* In the eyes of many people, a person who is knowledgeable about many things, and whose mind can be observed to be dextrous and logical, would

qualify as having a good mind. However, such a mind may lack certain knowledge that is pertinent to living a sensible and constructive life, and may exhibit flaws in judgment or awareness which become obstacles as circumstances become increasingly sophisticated or complex. In the final analysis, such a mind has contents of inadequate quality.

In measuring the intrinsic quality of the contents of a person's mind, we must also keep in mind that knowing of a thing, or about a thing, is not the same as knowing a significant amount about it, and knowing a significant amount about it is not the same as knowing all about it that should be known about it. It is rare that someone knows all about something, and it is less common than one would suppose that someone knows an adequate amount about something. A person can know an adequate amount about something insofar as it pertains to the limitations of his own abilities and circumstances, but this is not the same as knowing an adequate amount about something. For example, do you know all that it is necessary to know to prevent World War III, or to stop the Aids virus from spreading rapidly? And would less be an adequate amount? Of course not. At best, you may be satisfied that you know an adequate amount about these subjects insofar as your own ability to do something about them is concerned, but this does not mean that you know an adequate amount about them. Does a lawyer ever know enough about the law to be able to figure out how to insure the greatest amount of justice under any given set of circumstances? Of course not. Then, can he ever be said to know an adequate amount about the law? In my opinion, he cannot. I doubt there are a great many lawyers who can even do a good job of defining justice. "The greatest good for the greatest number" is a commo.ly offered definition of justice, but in my opinion it can be no more than one of its characteristics. In trying to define justice, there are many things to be considered. For example, do the rights of the individual take precedence over the rights of society? Is justice determined by the kind of revenge we impose upon the wrongdoer, or by the quality of compensation we award the victim, or both? (In my opinion, justice is not complete until the victim of injustice is made whole.) What place does mercy for the criminal play in the concept of justice; and

should the wrongdoer be expected to pay with "an eye for an eye," or through public service of some kind? Does a criminal have a right to be rehabilitated at taxpayer's expense by virtue of the fact he is a member of the human race? These are questions that occur to me when thinking about the nature of justice, and are the type of questions I feel must be considered when attempting to define justice. The task becomes even more complex when one is faced with the necessity of making a decision based upon correct principles of justice. If a man kills another, for example, where is there a lawyer with adequate knowledge of justice to be able to calculate for us the really just thing to do about it, all things considered? Who really knows? So let us use the words "knowing" and "knowledge" with all due humility henceforth, if we do not do so already.

PERCEIVING, ORGANIZING AND REVISING THE EXISTING CONTENTS OF ONE'S MIND

The type of person each of us is, as well as the type of behavior each of us will exhibit and the quality of life each of us will live, will to a large extent be determined by the contents of our mind. One of the primary reasons that people live unsuccessful or unhappy lives is that the contents of their minds are in disarray, or are of poor quality. The contents of one's mind can be altered or improved upon so that it better serves its intended purpose; but, before that can occur, the contents must first be clearly identified.

In examining the contents of someone's mind for the purpose of taking an inventory and eventually improving those contents, many different types of evaluations can be made, and many different types of measurements can be taken. If a map is made of the contents of a *normal* or *average* person's mind, streets, towns and cities will not be indicated. Instead, we will find such things as facts, information, simple ideas and complex concepts. We will find feelings about things and impressions of things, some of which are vague or unclear. We will find some prejudices. We will find some partial ideas, some poorly formulated ideas, and some incorrect ideas. We will find patterns of thinking, some of which are sensible and logical, others of which are superficial or pointless. We will find attitudes, and tendencies toward certain moods or states of mind, some of which are healthy; and some of which are detrimental, or in need of improvement. We will find certain personality characteristics; and some automatic patterns of response to things, which may have been learned or acquired over the years. We will find principles, values and beliefs, which form the foundation of the person's character, and determine if the person is honest, ethical, good and kind; or cruel, dishonest, corrupt, greedy and wicked; or any combination of these. We will find some contradictory thoughts and some contradictory beliefs. We will find tendencies of thought or habits of thought, and preferences of subject matter upon which the mind selects to focus most fre-

quently. There may be some other categories of things to be found within an *average* or *normal* human mind that I have overlooked.

This listing of the wide array of contents that can normally be found within the human mind surely indicates that a good map of those contents is needed. But does anyone have such a map? Has anyone heard of the existence of such a map? Since no such map can be purchased or found, it is up to each individual to make his own map of the contents of his mind. However, unlike the contents of a house, the contents of a human mind are often not easy to identify or evaluate. This is in part because the *pair of glasses* through which each of us views the contents of our own mind are prejudiced in our favor. Each of us wants to think that everything within our mind is as it should be; or that only minor changes or improvements in those contents need to be made. But nothing could be further from the truth. One of the main reasons we have a faulty world is because the contents of people's minds are in disarray, or are of poor quality. Educators are partly to blame for the existence of so many poorly educated minds because most educators deal only in imparting collections of facts and information, and not in improving the overall quality of the human minds they are responsible for instructing.

Because the contents of a *normal* or *average* human mind are so varied and can exist in great quantity, identifying and organizing the contents of one's own mind is a lengthy and time consuming task, but worth the effort. I believe that accurately identifying the contents of one's own mind can be satisfactorily accomplished by each person over a period of months, or longer, using pen and paper. The objective would be *not* to list all your thoughts and impressions about things; but to distill the essence of: your beliefs and values; your motives and goals; your personal habits and pertinent psychological and emotional characteristics; your interests, problems, needs and vulnerabilities; your areas of confusion, self-doubt and uncertainty; and any other feelings or thoughts you have that you consider to be essential aspects of the person you are. The entirety of this procedure is the process of self-analysis, and should be regarded as an essential part of everyone's education. If a person can accomplish the task of accurately identifying the contents of his own mind, he will have done himself the

greatest service possible; for he will have prepared his mind for learning, growing and expanding. How can one learn, mature or expand one's awareness and understanding of things if one is unclear about the actual contents of one's own mind, or if the contents of one's own mind are vague, pointless or superficial? Only a well-organized, well-integrated mind, with clearly defined and worthwhile contents can be properly educated. Acquiring information, knowledge or skills prior to doing all we can to improve the existing contents of our mind is equivalent to trying to build a beautiful and expensive edifice atop a weak and unsound foundation—the outcome is predictable.

Each of us must summon the courage to admit that at least a portion of the contents of our mind is faulty, and must be improved. We must be willing to evaluate the contents of our mind with a determination to discard some things, to reorganize and reclassify others, and to revise and reshape others. We must be willing to make changes in the way we think about some things and feel toward them. We must be willing to admit that some of the subjects we focus our attention on are not the best, and that some of the thoughts we have about things are of inferior quality. We must be willing to admit that our logic is not always the best, and that some of our beliefs, values and principles can be improved as well. We must be willing to do all these things or we will never be able to improve the contents of our mind; and, as a result, we will never be able to become properly educated.

THE INTERNALIZATION PROCESS

The last two sections of this book have dealt with the existing contents of the mind. An area of study entirely different is: that which is yet to become contents of the mind. I have already dealt with that which is yet to become contents in a person's mind in connection with *thinking for oneself*, but not in connection with the actual incorporation of information or knowledge into a person's mind and life; a process which is commonly called learning, but which I refer to as: the internalization process. The internalization process refers to making what you are to learn a feeling, acting, breathing and integrated part of you as opposed to remaining, to whatever extent, separate from it.

Being able to recall something when questioned, or in an exam, has been the criteria for learning prowess advanced by educators in America and elsewhere. This indicates that education has been occurring on a superficial level wherever that is the policy. Because a person knows something in the sense that he can recall it verbally, or in an exam, is no indication of the quality of its internalization into his mind and life. In fact, knowing something can be a detriment to a person's mind and life. When it becomes clear that true learning involves the harmonious internalization of something into a person's mind and life, other things also become clear. For instance, it becomes clear that it is not good to know things that are not useful for one to know; or that do not in any way apply to one's needs, desires or inclinations; or that take the place of other things that one would be better off learning. It becomes clear that it is not good to know things that one is not prepared to know about; or that one cannot relate to or get involved with in a constructive manner. It becomes clear that learning is good only to the extent that what is being learned can be personalized for one's own use. Just as excess baggage is a burden to a person, excess knowing is. As throwing a wrench in working machinery fouls it up, an uncoordinated, inappropriate, discordant or only partially integrated piece of information or knowledge disturbs a person's balance, integrity and identity. (In the process of coming in contact with new things, and in the process of internalizing something, frame of reference may be temporarily upset; and a person may

feel temporarily unbalanced and out of sorts. But this is not a very functional state, and must be repaired before life can resume normally.)

To internalize something is to give it the highest honor. It is as sacred a business as choosing a mate. It is only a small percentage of what a person encounters that he will eventually internalize. That small percentage must be the right things; and the right things can only be the best that are available. To settle for less, or to choose prematurely, would be to do oneself a grave injustice; for, that which you internalize into your mind and life is that which you are. Who wants to be second rate—a collection of inferior matter, so that when he looks at himself or thinks of himself, he does so with distaste? If one is not watchful of what he allows to take root in his consciousness, this is what will happen; and this is why the internalization process is so important. It is the internalization process that can improve or corrupt consciousness. We want, then, to perform this thing—the internalization process, properly.

Inasmuch as the conscious mind has existing contents at the time of confronting any piece of information or knowledge, and cannot act independently of those contents, if a piece of information or knowledge is to be learned; in other words, integrated harmoniously into a person's mind and life; a question that arises—the major question—is how can it be done within the conditions those existing contents must necessarily set forth? Yes, how can it be done? Think of all the effort a person goes through in selecting what beliefs and style of life he has. A person cannot avoid many heartfelt struggles and difficult decisions in becoming the person he is; at least, certainly not in a modern world, where we are all exposed to so many alternatives of behavior and belief. Add to this the fact that each person is complex and peculiar to himself as to his reactions, thought processes, preferences and inclinations; and you must come to the conclusion that integrating something harmoniously into the existing contents of one's mind and life is a complicated and personal business, as is the decision to attempt to do so.

The first thing to be aware of is: things that one is considering for internalization should have been approved of in terms of think-

ing for oneself. Considering something for internalization, if it follows a rational procedure, occurs after having positive experiences at thinking for oneself about it. In having thought for oneself about something one is considering for internalization, one must have isolated it from the material it was associated with as a complete thing, or isolated it and turned it into a complete thing; decided it was a legitimate and worthwhile thing; decided that it applied to him; decided he was currently prepared to relate to it further; and he must have changed its format into the one that best suited him, with positive results. Then he must have established an approach to thinking about it, with positive results. His experience with these things will tell him a lot about whether it is the right thing for him to *attempt* to internalize into the contents of his mind and life. The fact that it was a good thing to think for himself about does not necessarily mean that it is a good thing for him to internalize. Thinking for oneself about something, for example, may be simply of experiential value; and, after the thing has passed through the person's life, leaving some sort of subtle beneficial effect, the person has no more direct contact with it. The criteria for internalizing something—which are *in addition* to the criteria already set forth for thinking for oneself about something, follow in three alternatives:

(1) It must be able to blend into a person's current life and thought processes, producing beneficial results.

(2) Or, it must be able to become a logical extension of a person's current life and thought processes, producing beneficial results.

(3) Or, its internalization must result in an acceptable transformation or radical alteration of a person's current life and thought processes, producing beneficial results.

A person should decide which alternative applies to the thing he is considering for internalization into the contents of his mind and life. If he cannot find validity in any of the three possibilities, internalization of the item is out of the question.

To really convey an understanding of all that is involved in the internalization process, I feel it is best to take a piece of information or knowledge up to, then through, this set of three alternatives. For this purpose, imagine a person who is reading a novel. He

comes across the description of a beautiful romance that affects him strongly, but he is unsure why he is so moved by the words. It seems to him that the words might have a special meaning when applied to his own life, but he cannot immediately discern why this is so. He decides to apply the principles set forth in the sections in this book on thinking for oneself and the internalization process. In doing so, the first thing he must determine is why the words affect him so strongly. After he understands what about the words is affecting him so strongly, he will have real information with which to decide what, if any, significance they have when applied to his own life. So he distills the passage, and realizes that the author is trying to point out the "magnificence of true love," and this is what moved him so. Thus, the reader has isolated the thing in its complete form. Now the reader must decide if the thing is true and worthwhile, if it applies to him, if he is prepared to concern himself with such a matter, and in what format he wants it. He thinks about these things, and decides that there *is* such a thing as true love. However, he is responding to a vague, deeply hidden feeling inside himself. He does not know that it is true, but senses that it is. Furthermore, he feels that this truth applies to everyone, himself included. He also feels that it is an important truth, and that he should think about it further, and that there is time and room in his life to occupy himself at times with thoughts about it. Now he must decide if "the magnificence of true love" is the correct format insofar as his mind and life are concerned. He mulls it over, and determines that "the magnificence of true love" is the format in which he wants the matter. He formulates an approach to thinking about "the magnificence of true love" (this may involve such things as how often he will think about it, if he will take notes on the subject or read articles on the subject, and so forth), thinks about it periodically; and decides that he wants to internalize it into his thought processes and life. Now, we come to the current place of departure; and are again faced with the three alternatives I posed. Will it *blend into* his current life and thought processes, producing beneficial results? Or, can it become a *logical extension* of his current life and thought processes, producing beneficial results? Or, can its internalization result in an *acceptable transformation or radical alteration* of his cur-

rent life and thought processes, producing beneficial results? He thinks about these alternatives. After an interval of considering the alternatives, he begins to realize that the concept will not blend into his current life and thought processes as he has not thought about love in this way for years. The fact is, he has long forgotten about true love; and has been looking only to love, and be loved in return. He also decides that "the magnificence of true love" cannot even be a logical extension of his current life and thought processes because he has for years made a point of dating several women at a time so that he would not be trapped into an emotional dependence upon any one of them. Consequently, if he is to internalize "the magnificence of true love," it must be as an *acceptable transformation or radical alteration* in his current life and thought processes, producing beneficial results. Now, if he internalizes the concept into his thought processes and life, his former view of love is going to have to be sacrificed to a significant extent; and, likewise, his commitments based on his former view of love. He is going to have to change his style of life, insofar as his love life is concerned, so that his love life will more approximately conform to the new addition to his beliefs. He must decide if he is able to do this, and if he really wants to do it. He seriously considers these things, and decides that he can internalize "the magnificence of true love" into the contents of his mind and life by using alternative number three, resulting in beneficial results; and that he wants to do it. He has decided that even though he has enjoyed dating several women at a time, it has caused his life to become too fragmented, and empty of that beautiful feeling of total and unconditional love; and that he is willing to make some temporary sacrifices while in search of the type of love that he had read about in the novel.

In the process of internalizing a piece of information or knowledge into the contents of one's mind and life, a few other considerations are appropriate. They have to do with positioning and priorities. For example, a piece of information or knowledge may be placed in the foreground of a person's life or in the background. It may be placed at the center of his life or merely at the circumference. It may be placed close to certain other information or knowledge, or far away from it. Such spatial comparisons are

invaluable when thinking in terms of the existing contents of your mind. Priorities refers to the relative value of things in a person's mind. If the thing is highly valued, it will be given first, or near first, priority of focus. If not so highly valued, it will be given a much lesser priority of focus. (The material in this paragraph is also useful in keeping an account of the contents of one's mind: Bookkeeping in the QUALITY OF KNOWING section.)

Since the internalization of an item of information or knowledge, a process which technically begins at the point of thinking for oneself about something, has been shown to involve so many steps and decisions; it should now be apparent that true learning, which is the process of internalizing a piece of information or knowledge into the contents of one's mind and life, is no simple matter; and that the type of learning that has been in vogue in the United States, and in many other countries, barely scratches the surface, and is wholly inadequate.

THE REACTION PROCESS

If the internalization process is to have an opportunity to occur without obstacles or impediments, a person's reactions to things must be uncontaminated.

A reaction is involvement unfolding. It is in reacting to things that we fully understand how they affect us. If our reactions are not freely completed, the effects of things upon us are not fully understood. For this reason, people must assume responsibility in completing their own reactions to things; and others must grant them optimum conditions for doing so.

Anything that comes in contact with a person's awareness has the potential of stimulating the person into reacting to it.

A person can react to something in an endless variety of ways: by contemplating it, arguing about it, asking a question about it, reading about it, putting himself in undefined association with it to see what he comes up with, etc. And things that seem to be very removed from the reaction process might well be a part of it. For example, spontaneously going on a boat ride could serve in the contemplating of an idea, and thereby be a part of a person's reaction to the idea.

A reaction can last seconds or years. Sometimes a reaction to something will remain dormant for weeks, months, or even years before it renews itself.

Frequently, there is more than one step or phase to a person's reaction to something. And, often, not even the person can see the steps and phases he is going to go through when reacting to something. For example, do you know how you would react if I struck you? I doubt it. It would depend a great deal on what you considered my motive to be, how you responded to me in general and on your current mood. And, even if you knew in advance what all those things would be at the point of my striking you, you may still not know how you would initially react until you actually did so. But reaction, itself, often merely tells you how close you are to the target, giving you food for comparison. What happens to you, and the thing you are reacting to, in the process of reacting plays a substantial part in determining the content of the reaction process.

Externally imposed discipline, rules, guidance and procedures can have a very high danger content because they threaten the reaction process, often preventing important instances of reaction from occurring at all. When reactions are prevented from occurring, it is often the case that the person whose reactions have been prevented from occurring is not even aware of it.

It is due to frequently unexpressed reactions as a result of the circumvention of reactions by persons or circumstances, and as a result of the discouragement of reactions by culture and environment, more so than it is due to inadequacies in native or even learned intelligence, that we have people who mature late or who never mature; and that we have people of little sophistication and awareness.

Let me give you an example of how circumventing reactions prevents people from growing up. Let us say that Johnny is given a host of assignments throughout a school semester that are unappealing to him. His teacher says he must do them and so do his parents. He does them in spite of an urge to do other things instead. He may be unaware that the urge he is neglecting for the sake of the assignments he must do is important to be followed, and would eventually lead to the proper unfolding of his personality or his destiny. If he represses this vital urge enough times, he may lose contact with it, and one day it may not return. This is one of the main ways in which lives are ruined.

Parents and educators should take special note of this, and see to it that the reactions of children and students, in the form of every kind of response, including interest, disinterest, contemplation, rebellion, partial interest, obsessed interest, and bizarre interest, are respected and not infringed upon; and that they are not preempted by the provision of expectations, rules, regulations or procedures invented by others. (This does not apply, of course, if the person is engaging in something immediately and seriously dangerous to his or someone else's well-being, such as reckless automobile driving or the use of hard core drugs.) And all persons who are old enough to think should do their utmost to guard the integrity of their reactions against every form of alternative or substitute behavior.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR ONE'S OWN LEARNING PROCEDURE

The typical student in the United States walks into his classroom or classrooms with the expectation of receiving information he is to absorb, getting assignments and taking tests. This clearly indicates that he is not responsible for his own learning procedure. At best, he fills in the details of procedure that is outlined for him. This method of education is faulty for four reasons:

(1) It usurps students' sense of responsibility.

(2) It diminishes students' decision-making opportunities, limits their options and choices, and deprives them of challenges that are rightfully theirs.

(3) It deprives students of their independence, and encourages them to be submissive.

(4) It is disrespectful of each student's self development, and works to remove him from being connected with it.

Many educators and others feel that as long as students are given some options and some choices while engaged in studying and learning, it is adequate to insure that they are not being overly manipulated or controlled and that their personal needs are being met. This attitude brings to mind many analogies which reveal its absurdity, and I would like to share one with the reader. To assist me in demonstrating my point, I'll ask you, the reader, to accept the proposition that you wish to engage in some sports activity next weekend. A friend of yours, who has the same idea in mind, insists that you play tennis with him. He gives you unlimited options and choices if you will do so. He tells you that you may pick the time, the place, and the duration of the match. You may freely select a racket from his collection, pick the side of the court you wish to play on; and you may elect to keep score or simply hit balls back and forth to one another. You may even take as many rest periods as you wish, in case you are out of shape; and you may elect to serve every ball, or no, serve at all. Certainly, in this example, you are given many choices; and, at first glance, it would appear that your friend is being very good to you. However, what if you have no interest in the game of tennis; have

found that you have no aptitude for it; have bad ankles that do not lend themselves well to the game of tennis; and, furthermore, you have your heart set on going swimming, a sport you adore and seldom get to do? Would you then be pleased, or comfortable, with all the choices your friend has given you? Of course not. The exact same comparison can be applied to choices of: *subject matter and procedure* while learning. The student who is permitted to make choices in connection with his learning activities, but only within the parameters assigned to him by his teachers and by school policy, will most likely not be a happy or prosperous student. He may do what he is told to do, but he will not be getting out of his studies the good that he should. Responsibility for assigning learning goals and for formulating learning procedure must become the prerogative of the student and cease being an automatic right belonging to teachers.

By establishing a specific learning curriculum for their students, complete with strict rules of participation and performance, teachers and school administrators in America prevent their students from experiencing much of the joy of learning, and many of its most exciting challenges. By demanding so much from their students, teachers are indirectly asserting that they know what is best for their students concerning their learning needs; but, teachers and school administrators seem not to have thought of inquiring about the nature of their students' actual learning needs. If teachers and school administrators were serious about wanting to do a good job of teaching, they would first try to determine what the learning needs of their students are. And the results they arrived at would have to be approved of by their students before they could be seen to have genuine relevance to their needs. One of the facts that such an inquiry would reveal is that students have a need to *choose their own subject matter to be learned and to formulate their own learning procedure.* (*Learning procedure* encompasses such things as which books a person will read and which studying aids he will select, what thoughts he will think, which persons he will learn from, what studying techniques he will develop, which learning goals he will assign himself.)

Teachers and school administrators in America have gotten so bogged down in their limited idea of what education consists of

that most of them have never stopped to inquire about the skills that might be needed to sensibly manage and direct the knowledge they are so intent that their students should acquire. Most teachers and school administrators in America have not squarely faced up to the idea that all knowledge is worthless unless it is possessed by those who have acquired the skills needed to be capable users of that knowledge. It is in this connection that the importance of *choosing one's own subject matter to be learned and formulating one's own learning procedure* becomes evident.

To be a capable user of knowledge, a person must be self-sufficient and self-reliant. He must be able to motivate himself and assume responsibilities. He must have acquired an ability to think for himself, and be able to make sound judgments and intelligent decisions. He must be able to successfully manage his own affairs. And he must be inclined to confront rather than avoid life's most important challenges. This is a pretty tall order, but without acquiring a proficiency at these skills, all else a student learns will be pointless. Without these skills, a student graduate may be stuffed full of information and knowledge, but he will be poorly equipped to use it. (In addition to having the skills I just listed, a person who is to be a responsible, as well as a capable, user of knowledge must be guided by a desire to be a truly good person, and he must be unwilling to plunder or exploit others in order to achieve his own aims. But this is a matter of morals, and is not the focus of this particular essay.)

So, how does a student set himself upon the road to becoming a capable user of knowledge, and how can this objective be furthered by his instructors and by school policy? To develop the skills needed to become a capable user of knowledge, a student must be provided with the opportunity to *choose his own subject matter to be learned and his own learning procedure.* Being engaged in *choosing one's own subject matter to be learned and one's own learning procedure* on a regular and consistent basis throughout the course of one's learning career, which includes wrestling with all the dilemmas and challenges of doing so, calls upon a student to exercise and perfect the skills needed to become a capable user of knowledge, namely: managing one's own affairs, motivating oneself, thinking for oneself, assuming responsibility, confronting

life's challenges, making decisions and judgments of a comprehensive nature, self-reliance.

I think everyone will agree that an adult who cannot manage his own affairs, motivate himself, think for himself, assume responsibilities, confront life's challenges, make decisions and judgments of a comprehensive nature, and rely on himself when his circumstances are difficult or complex is in a lot of trouble. Likewise, when youngsters are allowed to graduate from schools in a learning program which divests them of their right and their need to apply these skills within all aspects of their learning, they are pointed toward trouble in later years. To become a self-sufficient adult, a youngster must work at being a self-sufficient student. To be able to manage his own affairs as an adult, a youngster must be given the opportunity to manage his own affairs as a student. To be able to think for himself as an adult, a youngster must first attempt to think for himself as a student; which he cannot do unless he is given the opportunity to decide all aspects of what and how he will learn. To be able to motivate himself as an adult, a youngster must first struggle with motivating himself as a student; which means being given the option of not learning anything so that he will be required to motivate himself to learn something. To be able to confront life's challenges as an autonomous adult, a youngster must be allowed to confront all the challenges of being an autonomous student, with assistance provided by teachers when it is needed or sought.

Submissive and obedient students will likely end up being submissive and obedient adults. Can we realistically expect a different outcome? Teachers and school administrators vastly underestimate the capability of their students, and completely ignore the aspirations of humankind, when they make their students pawns of their educational aims and methods. It is only independent-minded youngsters, who are given the opportunity to think for themselves, make their own decisions and manage their own affairs within all aspects of their careers as students who will end up being capable users of the knowledge they are acquiring.

I know that strong objections to my concept of *choosing one's own subject matter and learning procedure* will come from educators of young children and from educators of young, and older,

adults. The educators of young children will say that young children do not have the ability to *choose their own subject matter and learning procedure*, and therefore should not be given any responsibility for doing so. The educators of young, and older, adults will say that adults are no longer immersed in the process of self-development, and usually take classes to learn specific information in order to advance their careers; and, consequently, have no interest in, nor need for, *choosing their own subject matter and learning procedure*. I can only reply that any facts, information, knowledge, awareness or skills *acquired* while a student (regardless of age) is involved in *subject matter he has selected and learning procedure he has designed* will have been much more happily learned, and will be of greater benefit to the student than the same material learned by means of the techniques of compulsory learning, which prompt a student to do what he is told to do, so as to serve the expectations and requirements of teachers and administrators. Just as there is more than one way to cut a cake, there is more than one way to teach the same knowledge, information and skills. Those who use their imagination should be able to figure out ways of teaching both young children and adults that enable them to select their own subject matter to be learned, their own learning materials, their own methods of study and their own studying goals. This method of teaching would require much more input from the students, and the role of the teacher would be changed to that of assisting students to learn rather than deciding things for them. Nonetheless, I believe that young children can benefit greatly from being encouraged to make their own choices in all matters connected with the learning process; and that adults of all ages, studying all subjects, at all levels of sophistication, can benefit greatly from designing their own studying goals and studying techniques, according to their interests and needs. Even if this method of learning is slower, the time spent doing it is much more fulfilling than time spent learning within regimes of enforced learning, where choices are few and often begrudgingly granted.

I understand that my concept of learning, which includes choosing one's own learning materials, methods of study and studying goals, will seem like a farcical proposition in the context of studying those subjects which require that exact information be learned

and precise procedures or techniques be acquired, such as would be the case in the study of law or medicine. But there are two important reasons why, even when students are studying subjects such as these, their options and choices should be maximized. One of the reasons is that students are not robots; and, as more freedom of choice is introduced into their schoolwork, in connection with what they are to study and how they are to study, students studying even the most precise and demanding subjects will feel more like human beings instead of like robots. The other reason is that to learn anything, that which is to be learned must be personalized to suit one's own mind and life; and the chances that this will occur increase proportionately as a student is permitted to participate more fully in the decision-making process within all aspects of the learning process.

So, how does a student go about *choosing his own subject matter and learning procedure?* Does he call out to the gods, and wait for their inevitable reply? And what does he do if they never reply? Remain stupid?... Does he look deeply into himself for an area of interest, and then pursue it when he finds it? Does he just start out learning, and find his way as he ricochets off his reactions? Well, of course, it is up to him. But what if a given student likes the sound of *choosing his own subject matter and learning procedure* and wishes to try it; then, upon trying it, finds out that he cannot make much headway at it? What if he finds out that every time he tries it, it is not long before he sees a dead end just in front of him? Well, I hope you will not be surprised if I tell you that this is probably normal. It is not easy to *choose your own subject matter and learning procedure.* It is much more complex and demanding than blindly following another, as is currently done in education. There are the constant, prodding questions: 'Is this the right thing to do? Is this the best thing to do? What if I fail? What if I am wasting my time? What do I want? Why am I doing this?' *Choosing your own subject matter and learning procedure* is, indeed, a battle with your own existence. But less than that is not learning, never was learning, and never will be learning.

CAN STUDENTS LEARN EFFECTIVELY WHEN THEIR LEARNING IS NOT MANDATORY?

Public education in the United States currently operates on the premise that learning must, in large part, be mandatory if it is to be successful. From the very beginning, young students are made to feel the pressure of *required learning*. True, the learning that youngsters do is often interspersed with fun activities, and teachers attempt to make learning enjoyable and agreeable to their students; nonetheless, a significant portion of the learning that youngsters do is *required* of them; and, if they do not do it, they are reprimanded or punished. Many of the private schools instruct in the same manner; and, many of the private schools that claim to offer a more relaxed learning environment, in which students may be more selective in choosing what, and how, they will study, still impose some learning requirements upon their students. Educating without imposing mandatory learning requirements of any kind is extremely rare; but, I believe it is a viable, healthy and dynamic approach to educating students of all ages. I think it is a particularly useful approach to educating our youngsters; and that, for that purpose, it is the best avenue possible.

I believe that teaching without mandatory learning requirements of any kind is particularly beneficial to youngsters *because* all young people are in the process of a sensitive search for all aspects of their own identities, and are busy making the sensitive choices that will ultimately determine the kind of people they will become. If the things youngsters are learning, and the overall direction of their learning, are determined by others, such as by teachers and by school policy, it can encroach upon or disrupt the natural process of development and the actual learning needs of the youngsters; and, when this happens, the learning process becomes harmful and destructive. Reading specific books, focusing on specific subject matter, or adhering to specific studying methods or goals concocted by a specific teacher or by the policy of a

specific school, does not guarantee that anything good will be accomplished, but, it does suggest the creation of problems for young students. In the first place, arbitrarily invented studying techniques, and arbitrarily assigned subject matter and studying goals, vary widely; and, cannot be said to be equally worthwhile. But, of much greater significance is the extent to which studying goals, techniques and subject matter coincide with the learning needs of students.

Since each young student is a unique individual, with different habits, needs, moods, attitudes, inclinations, abilities, capacities and growth patterns; and, since the circumstances of each young student's life may vary greatly, each young student has different learning needs. Teaching that is going to be effective and constructive must coincide with the learning needs of each student. Proper teaching must be individually tailored in terms of content and methods of instruction. Often it is only subtle variations in studying content and methods of instruction that will make all the difference. For example, a young student may be indifferent to carpentry; but, when it is suggested that he try and build a particular thing he has always wanted, his interest perks.

There are many ways of instructing students which are very effective, but impose no mandatory studying requirements; yet, which still require effective teaching skills. In a classroom or school in which there are *no* mandatory studying requirements, a teacher can encourage, challenge, inspire, stimulate, help and guide his students; and, he can provide them with unlimited learning aids, and with endless resources from which to learn.

If a teacher has a lot to offer his students, and has earned his student's respect because of his qualities as a person, and because of his abilities to relate to students on a very basic and human level, the students will be receptive to what he has to offer; and, more so if it is being offered without pressure or force.

All youngsters want to improve their lives, develop their talents, and wish to occupy their time in some useful way; or, will eventually be made aware of the good sense of these objectives as they gain a little in life-experience and maturity. A teacher who is skilled at tapping into these sensible and natural impulses can teach just as surely, I believe, as a teacher using the old methods of required

or compulsory learning; and, can teach much more constructively because he will be teaching in harmony with the actual needs and natural impulses of the students.

I would like now to describe some of the characteristics of the type of school I envision; that is, one which operates entirely on the premise of teaching without the use of *any* mandatory studying requirements...

The teachers who teach in such a school must be hand-picked for their ability to teach within its educational framework. When initially interviewed for a teaching position at the school, they would be asked how they felt about teaching in a school in which there are *no* mandatory studying requirements, except the very general requirement that the students be able to benefit from being there and participating in its programs. The prospective teachers would also be asked what they felt they had to contribute to such a school, and how they would go about teaching in such a school. The teachers would be selected for their expertise in useful knowledge, their maturity, their knowledge of life and how to live life successfully, their ability to gain the trust and comaraderie of the students; and their ability to encourage, inspire and guide the students in the learning process.

The classes offered in the school could be of any length, and in any subject the teacher deems useful to the students, so long as some students became willing participants in them. The students would be given a daily schedule of *the ongoing classes and the planned or impromptu educational events;* and could wander into and out of them at will. It would be up to the teacher or teachers to hold and maintain the interest of the students without the use of pressure or force of any kind. Those teachers who could interest the students in learning, and keep them involved, without demanding it or making threats of punishment or censure, would be the successful teachers in such a school.

Within this school would be all sorts of learning opportunities that are valuable to the students' present lives, and valuable in preparing the students for their lives as adults. Many practical trades and skills would be offered by expert craftsmen and artisans. Nor would science, literature or the arts be neglected. An active social life for the students would be encouraged, and much

attention would be paid to the proper development of each youngster's character. Work-for-money programs would be found in plenty at the school, or would be arranged by working in tandem with outside industry; so the youngsters could learn the discipline of hard work, and the skills of getting along in the workplace. Volunteer work that is humanitarian in nature would be promoted and encouraged at the school, so that students could learn the virtue and benefits of giving from the earliest age; and so that acts of charity could be inculcated into their concept of how life should be lived.

Some students would adapt well to learning in such a school. Those who do not adapt well to learning particular subjects or skills within such a learning environment may, nonetheless, benefit from the experience of simply being in it; and, if they do, should be permitted to remain. Those students who benefit 'ittle from such an environment, or are disruptive and interfere with the learning opportunities of other students, would be suspended or expelled. Teachers who appear at first to have the ingredients of being good instructors in such an environment, but ultimately fail in being able to teach successfully within it, will have their jobs at the school terminated.

A school such as the one just described would be a school designed to facilitate self-directed learning. If the end goal of education is to produce self-sufficient, self-directed, capable people, doesn't it seem plausible that the educational process, itself, can be more enriching, and produce better results, if learning is accomplished by means of self-initiated, self-directed and self-regulated studies? And if the end goal of education is to produce self-sufficient, self-directed, capable individuals, isn't it a bit suspicious when the bulk of a student's educational experience occurs as a result of educational expecfations and requirements imposed upon him by others?

If a student can learn by means of self-directed learning, made possible and assisted by the appropriate teachers, and a school policy which endorses and promotes it; we can be sure that his learning relates to and pertains to him, and to his own needs and growth patterns; and we can be sure that the manner of his learning will be appropriate for him and comfortable. But when

learning is done by demand, we are never sure if it corresponds to a student's needs, abilities or interests; or, if it is harmonious with his particular psychology or growth patterns; and, consequently, we risk endangering the identity, the psyche, and the happiness and peace of mind of the student.

In a school designed for the purpose of self-directed learning, the school grounds and buildings might appear similar to any other school; but the curriculum available for study, the teaching methods of the teachers and learning habits of the students would not resemble their counterparts in a traditional public school, or in most private schools. The differences in his schooling, from a youngster's point of view, would begin with his choices of *subject matter and methods of study*. Instead of being restricted or limited in number, choices of subject matter would be limited only by the interests of the student, and choices of methods of study would be confined only to the limits of the student's imagination and needs.

I feel it would be helpful to walk a student through a typical day in such a school in order to show, in greater detail, how such a school might operate. Since every student has a name and an age; I shall name our imaginary student Ralph, who is ten years of age.

It is now Ralph's first day at this unusual school, which is founded upon the principles of self-directed learning. Ralph is about to be given a verbal introduction to the school and a walk-through orientation. His introduction and orientation may be conducted by a teacher, by one of his peers, or by one of the older students in the school who has become well-versed in the ways of the school. Ralph is told that, in this school, entirely different things will be expected of him than are normally expected of youngsters in a public or private school setting. He is told that he will be expected to find a path of being and learning within the school which he is comfortable with, and which can benefit him in the present, and contribute to his future needs as an adult. He is told that while attending the school, he will be expected to learn, progress and enjoy himself; but the avenues or means by which he accomplishes this within the school will be his choice entirely. He is told that the teachers are available to assist and help him, but are never permitted to force or pressure him to study. He is told that behavior

of his which disrupts the work of the teachers, or interferes with the learning activities of the other students in the school, is unacceptable; and is cause for suspension or expulsion from the school.

While on this tour, Ralph is introduced to various teachers and students, and made to feel at home in the environment. He is treated with respect and dignity; and, as if he is someone special, and capable of fine accomplishments. He is taken to many different ongoing classes or programs of useful instruction so that he can see how they operate, with the hope that one or more of the classes or programs will arouse his interest. If it appears that one has sparked his interest, the tour guide will dally there a bit, and give Ralph a chance to investigate further.

It is pointed out to Ralph that in this school, while there are paid staff who are all experts in their field, everyone in the school is encouraged to teach and learn from one another; which means that the students are free to engage in instructing and helping one another; and, in like fashion, the teachers may instruct and help one another; and, the students may instruct and help the teachers, when that possibility arises. In this school, all who participate are considered students and teachers at various stages of evolving, and those who learn and those who teach are not segregated into separate groups; but are blended together into a purposeful mix of getting the most out of the school environment.

In taking Ralph to the area in which instruction in carpentry occurs, a note of curiosity and enthusiasm appears on his face. Here can be found boys and girls building various projects of interest to them, with instructors roaming freely among them and making themselves available for assistance. The students are of various ages, and at various stages of building their different items. One student is building a chair, another a coffee table, another a bookshelf, while several of the younger students are busy building wooden toys. Some of the students are going over books on carpentry, while a couple of the students who are complete novices are busy practicing pounding nails into wood and sawing lengths of wood. Books on carpentry instruction line the walls, and some tools of the trade that are in view are lying idle, ready for use.

An attempt is made by the tour guide to introduce Ralph to the instructors present, and as many of the students as possible; so

that he can feel at home in the class. The students and teachers create an atmosphere of acceptance for Ralph, and encourage him to return to the carpentry class and get involved. One of the instructors asks Ralph a few questions about his interest in carpentry and experience, to see if he might suggest a project for him that he might be interested in building, and that is within the scope of his present carpentry skills.

Moving on from the carpentry area, Ralph is given a complete tour of the grounds and facilities, and is permitted to ask any questions concerning the school or his upcoming participation within it. All rules and regulations of the school are fully explained to him, and support literature is provided. A general history of the school is given to him, as well as its general economic status. An effort is made to introduce Ralph briefly to the school administrators so that he can have a more complete picture of the school, and so that he can realize that the entire school tries to operate as if its members are one large family.

Finally, Ralph is told that he will be given adequate time to adjust to the ways of the school, and to find a niche for himself within it. He is told that since he is not being pressured or forced to participate in any particular curriculum, he must rely upon his own interests and inclinations to direct him. He is told that since many of us are not used to looking to our inner selves for direction in our education, it is something that takes getting used to. He is told that no one in the school will criticize him if he is slow in finding his true interests and inclinations; and that, as long as he is making an effort to do so, his time in the school will be considered well spent.

HOW TO MOTIVATE ONESELF TO LEARN

Motivating oneself is an important part of being successful at *choosing one's own subject matter and learning procedure*. In response to the question, "How do I motivate myself to learn?" let me first say that motivating oneself seems to involve either sustaining something, moving (or progressing) toward something, or moving (or progressing) away from something. Without the concepts of sustaining something, moving (or progressing) toward something, or moving (or progressing) away from something, self-motivation appears an impossibility. In the case of learning, self-motivation becomes applicable in the *progressing-toward* sense of the word. Now that this is clarified, I offer a comparison, and an example, for the purpose of showing how a person can go about motivating himself to learn; in other words, how he can progress toward something in his learning.

First, the comparison... If I wish to move a cup from one place to another, there must be a place to which I can move it, and I must do something to it to get it there. In motivating oneself to learn, the same type of situation is present as in getting a cup from one place to another. The same two elements are involved: the objective; that is, the place to get to, and the catalyst; that is, the something that you do to yourself to get you there.

So if you wish to motivate yourself to learn, you must have a place to progress toward in your learning. Then you must do something to yourself to get you there; must give yourself a push or a pull, as it were. This push or pull could be the reward of getting there, the realization of the necessity to get there, inspiring oneself to get there, or whatever. But there must be some continual fuel with which you can get yourself there. (The desire to learn is not a sufficient criterion in motivating oneself to learn, as it implies no specific place to get to. While the desire to learn might be the fuel; that is, the something that you do to yourself to get yourself to progress in your learning, it is insufficient without the realization of the place you want to get to in your learning.)

We are still lacking a practical example. Let me bring myself

into this example, and propose that I want to study history. If I am going to make any real headway, I must decide upon a place I want to get to in the learning of history. I also must have a catalyst I shall use to get myself there. That catalyst will be as an apple held in front of a horse to lead him somewhere. In other words, it will serve as an impetus or a go-between. It is that which enables the transition to occur between where one is at and where one is going. It is the link, as it were, the bridge, the road along which one will travel. And, strangely enough, that bridge, or however it is thought of, may not necessarily be related to either the place where one is at or the place to which one is going. It might just be a stimulant. Now, to continue on with my example... Upon dabbling into the subject of history, I discover in myself an interest in a certain historian. Realizing I must have an objective if I am to make any real headway in the study of history, I look for that objective in connection with said historian. I manage to ascertain in myself a sincere desire to read the main body of his work. Thus, one half of the problem is settled. Now I must find a way of motivating myself to do it. I work at it, but cannot seem to get myself going with any degree of intensity. I again examine the objective, and it still satisfies me. The fault, then, lies with the catalyst. In desperation, I remember that I have a very rich uncle, an interesting fact in that I have need of additional money. This uncle likes me a lot, has always been accommodating, and is rather bizarre and unconventional in his outlook on life. I feel that he would appreciate an unusual proposition if it were for a good cause. So I go to that uncle and ask him to offer me a thousand dollars if I finish reading all of the historian's work, and I specify that I am not to receive a penny of the money until I have completed the task in its entirety; and I even provide my uncle with a checklist of those books which are considered to be the mainstay of the historian's work. If my uncle were to accept my proposition, and offer me the thousand dollars on the condition that I read every book on the checklist I provided him; his offer could be just the added incentive, the stimulant, that I need to read the historian's work.

In trying to formulate the places you will go in your learning, and the catalysts you will use to get yourself there, it is crucial

to try to pursue and follow your own reactions to that with which you are confronted within the learning situation; as it is these reactions that will reveal the nature of the place, or places, to which it is wise for you to go in your learning, and the type, or types, of catalysts that are needed to get you there. To do this, it is of course necessary to play into your reactions within the learning process, to let them be the focus of your concentration and the pulse of your activity, to become familiar with their language and cues; and to take direction from them. Just as driving a car has its own language and cues, a person's reactions within the learning process will have their own language and cues. As you begin to learn to move, and work, with your reactions within the learning process, sensible objectives and their necessary catalysts in your learning will not be difficult to ascertain. That which you could not see with a telescope, you will be able to see with a microscope. That which you could not know of as a stranger, you will be able to know as a friend. That which you bypass ordinarily will show itself to be a world replete with assistance. By paying close attention to your reactions, you are paying close attention to your instincts. It is, perhaps, the greatest form of self-indulgence; but, at the same time, it is the most useful form of it, as it is the basis of all integrity in thought and deed. In becoming absorbed in the subtleties of your reactions as they relate to your learning, uncertainty about your learning goals and motivation becomes less a possibility as it becomes your specialty. To the extent that this uncertainty poses you a real threat, you should become absorbed in the subtleties of your reactions within the learning process. It is an extremely common error to assume that to know more about a subject or area of study is to know more about your direction in it. The truth of the matter is that to know more about your reactions to a subject or area of study is to know more about your direction in relation to it.

THE APPLICATIONS OF KNOWLEDGE

Since knowledge is only as valuable as it is useful; but, more precisely, as it is useful to the person who has it, it follows that a person should not seek a line of progress in his learning that does not conform to his use for what he is learning. A student's learning activities can be no more inspiring to him than are the prospects for making use of what he is studying; and, the more worthwhile application he can find for something, the more meaningful it becomes to him. A student who is aware of this will realize that, in truth, it is not what he knows that is important to him; rather, it is his skill at applying it, and the quality of gain that can thereby be obtained. He will realize that it is infinitely better to have one idea with a few good possible applications in mind for it than to merely have one hundred ideas. He will continually focus on the application of what he knows and is confronted with in the learning situation, and will give it a preference greatly in excess of the acquiring of ideas, facts and information to keep the scales balanced in its favor. He will, in truth, not be a seeker of knowledge. He will be a seeker of the applications of knowledge. If he submits himself to a challenge of what he knows, it will not be for the purpose of testing the quantity of facts and information he possesses. Instead, it will be to determine his skill at applying what he knows. In other words, his will be a "doing" existence. He will learn to despise dormant knowledge, realizing that an inactive piece of knowledge is a useless one and should be replaced by one that can be put to use. By not allowing the lack of use to enter into his acceptance, he maintains his respect for use itself. In seeking to learn the applications of knowledge, and in trying to find opportunities for applying it, a student points himself toward true success in *choosing his own subject matter and learning procedure*. While postponed gain, as advocated by those who believe in acquiring a large body of dormant knowledge and waiting until you graduate to use it, may appear to be theoretically feasible; it is not emotionally healthy. It can be compared to wooing a girl for years before you

are allowed to touch her. It is far better to be learning less and applying more of it; than to be learning more, and applying less of it.

SPEAKING OUT

A very important aspect of *choosing one's own subject matter and learning procedure* is speaking out. It is a unique fact that our thoughts and feelings often exist at a subconscious level. One of the finest ways of bringing them to the surface so we can view them and understand them is by simply talking about them. One of the finest ways of finding out one's position on a matter is in voicing one's opinions and discussing them. If one's position on a matter is unclear, relating to it must be clumsy and faulty; and so, there is little sense in proceeding in relation to it. In the process of learning, where understanding is critical and the need for it almost constant, speaking out becomes a prime tool for analysis and clarification. It is essential that teachers and schools make every effort to promote speaking out throughout every facet of the educational process. Those students who are sincerely and enthusiastically engaged in discussion or debate should be praised in this connection, encouraged to continue and not distracted for any reason; and those who avoid speaking out must be encouraged to see what they are missing. And students themselves must look to speaking out as a valuable tool to aid them in *choosing their own subject matter and learning procedure* with wisdom and foresight.

INTROSPECTION AND REFLECTION

Introspection and reflection are other important learning tools. They are strictly contemplative exercises, as opposed to interactive or participative ones in the world at large. Their use is internal adjustment. Continual exposure to things requires continual reorientation; and what better place to conduct that reorientation than behind closed doors, where a person is not subject to the expectations and needs of others, or to the changing currents of circumstance? It is a person's opportunity to drop the social self, the defensive self, even the compassionate self, and see himself when he is not being pulled or distracted by one persuasive influence or another. It is an opportunity to see oneself as a still target, rather than a moving one.

Introspection and reflection are put to use to improve our relationship with things in our mind; that is, to sharpen our focus on them, to organize them better, or to expand our understanding of them by thinking about them from different angles; and they are also used to better evaluate the effects of things upon us. Introspection and reflection contribute significantly to the quality of our mind, and to our ability to deal with what we are confronted with in our daily lives. They are essential tools for keeping the mind in good condition so that proper learning can occur. It is clear that introspection and reflection should be given a high priority if a student is to be successful in *choosing his own subject matter and learning procedure.*

FOUR REASONS WHY LEARNING CAN BE DIFFICULT

It is usually assumed that when a student finds learning difficult, the fault lies in the student's ability to comprehend. While this may be so, there are four other possibilities that need to be examined. An awareness of these will increase the learning know-how of the person who wishes to be a good student; and, can help to clarify the teaching process for those educators who are interested in improving their understanding of it. The four other possibilities are: the quality of information that is presented by educators; the quality of the presentation of that information; the student's preparedness; and, the student's approach. I shall discuss them in the order just given.

Information can come to us in all degrees of quality. A student should not be expected to learn information of poor quality without difficulty; when, in fact, even the brightest student may have difficulty learning it, and he would be worse off for it! What is important here is the precise degree to which information warrants being learned. If no such specification is made in connection with the information offered by teachers and schools, one can assume they consider the quality of information they offer to be beyond reproach. While the information they offer might be very good, it is very unfair to expect students to accept it as good prior to satisfying their consciences that it is. And if students do not, on their own initiative, question the quality of information offered by teachers and schools, it is the responsibility of educators to see that they do, as it is a sound and necessary aspect of learning procedure. Questioning the merit of a particular author or book, or even the value of an entire area of study, should not be out of bounds in the normal course of learning. In fact, just as much, or more, is learned from disagreeing with an author, or opposing a point of view, as is learned by accepting the information one is studying without dissent of any kind. The fact that the question of quality of information seldom arises in a typical classroom as a topic for serious discussion; but is, at best, voiced in a class by a lone wolf, who is usually politely disregarded by the teacher

and his fellow classmates, shows that something is urgently amiss. That is the tell-tale heart. Where a plausible criticism is never broached, or regarded as a serious challenge, corruption lies in hiding. Now, if teachers and schools openly stated their impression of the quality of information they were presenting, and backed up their statements with meaningful defense, defense other than a mere bibliographic cop-out—so and so recommends this and so does so and so—defense that consisted perhaps of what they had gained from the information, or what they see its implications to be; one could at least have some idea of the criteria the teacher or school had for presenting the books, authors and ideas that they do, rather than some other. But if no such defense is voiced, we can only assume that the teachers and schools do not want the quality of information they are offering to be questioned by their students. This is very unfortunate because it would generate healthy debate which, while it may wreck havoc on study plans and pat formulas for teaching, invigorates the learning environment like nothing else can. Students, and teachers who want their students to learn for the right reasons and in ways that are truly beneficial to them, should always examine *information* of every kind for its quality; and students should be willing to subject *it* to every critical test before submerging themselves in acquiring *it* or studying *it*. And they should realize that inability to learn could well be the fault of information of poor quality.

As information may come in all degrees of quality, so can its presentation. Students who have difficulty learning something have every right to question its presentation. Just as attractively presented, good tasting food encourages us to devour it, well presented information will encourage us to learn it. And as an unattractive, terrible tasting plate of food discourages us from eating it, poorly presented information discourages us from learning it. If it is a really nice looking shoe, a person is going to want to buy a pair if he can spare the money, and then he will hope that his size is available; whereas, though it is a really good shoe and just his size, if it has a dismal appearance, you could not get the same person to touch it. It is the same with learning. Esthetics is important. Educators and students should not discount improper presentation of information as the cause of faulty learning prior

to establishing sufficient reason why this could not be so.

Preparedness is a factor that is not given proper respect in the learning environment; perhaps because teachers are impatient to get on with the task at hand, and do not want to have to cope with too many complex challenges. But it must be stressed that a student who is not prepared to learn something cannot be said to lack ability to learn. He cannot even be said to have less intelligence than others. First of all, though he may not be prepared to learn certain information, he may be prepared to learn other information of equal value. This would be simply a matter of suitability of information. Secondly, learning is actually a sub-function. By that, I mean life cannot be measured in its terms. It must be measured in terms of life. Learning is only good insofar as it applies to living and is useful for living. If a student is not prepared to learn certain material as there is not room in his life for it, or it really does not relate to his interests, or other things concern him more—such as making better use of what he already knows—it is not the time for him to learn it. He is not prepared to learn it. At another time, he may be. This has nothing to do with his ability to learn or comprehend. It is, again, merely a matter of suitability. Teachers and schools must always consider these factors a possibility in judging a student's unwillingness or failure to learn. And individuals wishing to be good students should keep preparedness in mind as a crucial factor affecting their learning skills.

The student's approach to what he is learning is another key factor affecting his learning skills. The connection between a student and information does not occur automatically; rather, it is subject to the student's approach. Someone else's approach cannot be substituted for the student's approach. If you are to pick up a glass, you must have an approach. If you are to drive a car, you must have an approach. If a man is to kiss a woman, he must have an approach. We forget that walking requires an approach; but, before we were able to walk, we were quite aware of the need for an approach to walk. Anything you are to do requires an approach. If you fail to be able to do something, it does not mean that you are unable to do it. It may merely mean that your approach is inadequate. A student who is poor at learning, or at learning some particular thing, may not have stumbled onto the

right approach. Do not be quick to condemn him for his clumsiness or ineptness, as underneath may lie great aptitude which merely requires the right approach; which, should he discover it, will make his critics look like ignoble fools, and cause them to question themselves with an intensity equal to their criticism of him. Harken to this fact, all you educators, and students also. The proper approach may be all that is lacking to inaugurate a brilliant learning career.

There are countless different approaches to most everything we might learn or do, many of which we will never discover. This should be remembered; and, if it is, discouragement with trying to learn something that we are interested in will not precede a large amount of experimentation with approach.

I have next an example of a number of choices of approach to learning the same information; and I show how result varies with approach. The object of our attention is a student studying a given set of historical material. If he studies it with no particular approach, he should not be surprised to arrive at no particular outcome. If his approach is primarily an esthetic one, he would visualize the material and obtain information from it in terms of its entertainment value, its cultural value, and so on. If his approach is primarily a philosophical one, he would visualize the information and obtain data from it in terms of the profound truths inherent in it. If his approach is to understand his own society by picking up facts about such matters as the development of governments and economies, this is what he will gain from his studies of history. If his approach is just for laughs, he may well end up contributing to a career as a budding comedian through his studies of history. As his approach varies, so does the result.

Many people who are poor students, or who have never taken to learning much of anything, are missing out on a lot of the best that life has to offer. I am not suggesting that anyone should learn just because they are told to; but that all people should find something they really want to learn, and keep working at learning it until they stumble upon the right approach for them. It is usually not the fault of a poor learner nor an uninterested student that he is not learning. It is more likely caused by one or more of the four reasons for poor learning I have just presented.

UNLEARNING AND REEVALUATING

Without unlearning, learning could not take place. Unlearning is the art of finding, rooting out and disposing of those things one has absorbed, learned, or is inclined to be that are found to be inappropriate to one's thoughts, feelings, circumstances or lifestyle; or that are found to be surpassed in quality by things which may replace them.

Learning and unlearning can be compared to the doing and undoing of things. If a person ties a knot and decides to untie it; it is likely to be more difficult than tying it, as we all know. If a man flies from America to Japan and decides he wished he hadn't; to undo it, he has to fly back. If a person throws something away and decides he wants it back, he is likely going to take more time and expend more effort in retrieving it than in discarding it. Unlearning is just the other side of learning, as undoing is the other side of doing. But, for some reason, we never think about that side of the education coin. Yet, if a person is going to learn to be kind, he may have to unlearn the reasons for his cruelty; and if a person is going to learn to read enriching books, he may have to unlearn his habits of reading pornography, etc.

As often as not, the learning of something is dependent upon the unlearning of something else, just because both memory and the ability for involvement are limited.

Sometimes the need for unlearning arises in the form of an emotional obstacle toward learning, such as just not feeling like learning. If this happens, the negative feeling would have to be unlearned if learning is to take place.

If a person feels like learning, but his support for some of the aspects of his current habits or lifestyle will not permit him to, or interfere; he has to unlearn giving them his support if learning is to occur, or if it is to occur as he would like it to.

If a person wishes to learn a particular thing that replaces or contradicts something else in his mind or life, his support for the old will have to be unlearned if sane learning is to take place.

In learning a skill, or undertaking learning which requires a skill

to be able to do it, old habits of mind may have to be unlearned. For example, if a hard-core businessman, seldom given to expressing his feelings, wanted to become an artist, he might first have to unlearn some of the habits of mind of an inveterate businessman.

It is a common belief that things that are learned are done so by the mind only; and that, if the mind chooses to forget them, it simply tells them to go away, or casually drops them in the nearest junk pile or wastebasket. But that which has been truly learned, either in an academic sense, or by absorption, or by habit, is a part of a person. It is not in his mind only. To propose that it is makes a mockery of learning. He breathes it, feels it, thinks it, talks it, sees it, and hears it. When he wakes up in the morning, he sometimes finds it greeting him hello. When he reads the paper, it may float across the page. When he is sipping his afternoon tea, it should not surprise him to find it staring up at him from the bottom of the cup. When he looks up at the sky, he might see it superimposed on a cloud. He can discard it no more easily than he can discard a part of himself. In unlearning, then, one must alter oneself in some way.

So as not to underestimate the difficulty of unlearning, a person should keep in mind that what he is includes not only what he has learned through absorption and academic learning, but also what he feels and what he does; and he should realize that all these things are intertwined. Let us look at a criminal, for example. A criminal thinks and feels like a criminal. When he looks at a woman, he is more likely to see her pocketbook than his heart. When he walks along the road, he may well be contemplating some aspect of his next "job". When he hears a tune on the radio that is peaceful, he may think of the happiness he can gain from stolen dollars. And a carpenter... A carpenter thinks and feels like a carpenter. The rhythms of his pounding stay with him into the night. When he looks at his surroundings, he has a good eye for wooden structures. When a conversation takes a bent toward his trade, his interest perks. But there is more... A man who screams often at his wife screams often in his mind. A boy who frequently takes his dog on lazy walks often goes on lazy walks in his mind. A person who has a lot of fun sees the pleasant side of things. A person who is very often sad sees the dark side of things. A

person who feels lonely walks along deserted roads in his mind. A person who feels self-pity puts a cage around himself in his mind, and refuses to offer himself the slightest crumb of mercy.

Upon realizing that we really are what we have learned, what we do and what we feel, and that they are all intertwined, a person can begin to look at unlearning with sober intentions and expectations. He will not feel that what he knows, what he does, what he thinks or what he feels can be unlearned without incurring consequences to his daily activities. He will not think that he can unlearn something without finding some type of replacement for the space in his life that it filled, even if that replacement is the willingness to do nothing. He will not think he can unlearn something if there are things in his life very dependent upon it for their support without exerting great effort.

All the things that we think, feel and do are things that we get to know and understand; so that, after awhile, they become old friends of ours. We learn their idiosyncrasies, their needs. We work hard at finding outlets and avenues for them, and at discovering ways of pacifying them and cooperating with them. When there is a better way of thinking, doing or feeling that crosses a person's path and teases the person's interest, the old way will become jealous and flaunt its appeal. It will say, "I am the old way, the proven way. You must have faith in me. Give me time to show you what I can do, and you will not be sorry. Can you think you see all my possibilities when looking through the window of your negative attitude toward me? When was it that I disappointed you? Tell me, and we shall discuss it. Don't you remember the times I helped you? When you had nothing to do, you often called upon me; and I always made myself available to you. Often you sang praises of me. When you let me lapse into the rear of your life, you found yourself shocked at how lost you were without me. If you think you do not need me at this moment, it is because the time is not now that you need me; but that time is coming soon." And when a person begins to acquire a new interest in something, so that his attention is being drawn away from his usual activities, one of his usual activities will say to him in disgust, "Why have you discarded your head pillow and replaced it with a foot pillow? My dear man, you do not think with your feet! Protect your head,

not your feet. You have lain your head on me so long, you think that I am a part of your head; and that is why you think you can abandon your previous usage of me. But if you look more closely at the facts, you would not dare to do so. And that which you are aspiring to blend into your life at this time shows no promise of worth. It is but a good act by a good actor." Or the usual activities will transform themselves into lonely, unclothed children in the winter snow, and beg him for mercy. They will make him feel ashamed of his neglect. Or the usual activities will transform themselves into protagonists, and hurl at him stark new challenges to entice him back. Or they will bargain with him as the most clever of businessmen, offering great yields at half the usual investment, and new sources of borrowing at low interest. And they will act in unison, showing the needs of each of the usual activities to be the fortress and inspiration of the others. So a person should approach unlearning heavily armed. He should count on struggle, rather than hope there will be none.

That which indicates to what extent learning or unlearning is in order is reevaluation.

A healthy person has a continually shifting consciousness, which perpetually combines learning, unlearning and reevaluating in everything it does. It is constantly examining the way one looks at things and associates with them: reevaluating; it is constantly active at increasing the basic foundation of one's intellect: learning; and it is constantly looking for reasons for, and upon finding them, practicing disassociation: unlearning. The pliability of such a mind is its greatest asset, enabling one not to resort to a static approach to life.

When this type of equality is given to learning, unlearning and reevaluating, things are seen bathed in the light of their alternatives and potential, and life has got to be much more alive than otherwise. It is only those who, once they have learned things, do not unlearn, reevaluate and continue learning who find themselves in mental ruts.

We really cannot expect to stumble onto the right way of doing something the first time, or the proper understanding of a thing in our first conceptual image of it. And it stands to reason that the longer we work at a thing, the better we will become at it;

and the longer we conceptualize something, the closer we will get to its true essence. These are good reasons to place great emphasis on the value of unlearning and reevaluating, good reasons to give them a status in education equivalent to that of learning. And if we are ever to change an old way of doing things, or an old thought or deleterious mood that has been ingrained by habit, it is precisely these: unlearning and reevaluating, that we must look to for assistance. This is yet further reason to give them a status in education equivalent to that of learning.

It would be a great comfort to me if, when I asked a person what he was doing with himself, he were to tell me that he was busy unlearning, or reevaluating his actions, thoughts or feelings about things. This would show me that he did not have a prejudice toward learning, which is truly only one side of a two-sided issue: reevaluating being the mediator.

If these three concepts were to become a part of the culture of society, I would run into many people who were unlearning, or who were reevaluating their actions, thoughts and feelings about things. Perhaps some would be unlearning some things, reevaluating others and learning still others at the same time. Such would be music to my ears, and I would feel that a truly meaningful approach to education had a foothold.

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